No. 14 March 1996

SAMUDRA

INTERNATIONAL COLLECTIVE IN SUPPORT OF FISHWORKERS

Contents

SAMUDRA No. 14 MARCH 1996 TRIANNUAL REPORT OF ICSF

Comment

Food First?

Fish is at one and the same time both a source of food and income. This is a quintessential characteristic which should be borne in mind while discussing the issue of food security. In fishing communities, on the one hand, there are large numbers who depend primarily on fishing for a livelihood. For them, it is the income from the sale of fish that lets them pay for the bare necessities of life. On the other hand, there are those who rely on farming, fishing or mere gathering from the bush, in order to exist. For the people of such communities, fish is less a source of income than a source of subsistence—often a vital means of partially meeting their daily nutritional requirements of protein.

From the point of view of consumers, in several developing countries there exist underprivileged classes like agricultural labourers, plantation and mine workers, who bank on fish as a source of cheap protein. This demand for fish is met mostly by domestic or regional trade. In contrast, there are fairly prosperous consumers in developed countries whose culture, habits and dietary preferences, more than anything else, determine the demand for fish. The requirements for this large market are satisfied mostly from imports.

Recent international efforts to address the issue of food security have gone only part of the way. Consider the Kyoto Declaration and Plan of Action on the Sustainable Contribution of Fisheries to Food Security that sprung from last year's International Conference on the Sustainable Contribution of Fisheries to Food Security, as well as the 31st Session of the FAO Committee on Food Security in February this year. They provide only fragmentary approaches on how to effectively address the issue of food security in the context of fisheries.

Both these meetings focused only on supply-side issues. Augmenting supply *per se* means little to poorer consumers at the household level, unless the increase in supply should translate into better incomes for poorer fishworkers

Furthermore, concentrating only on the supply side, without in any way restraining demand, could be ultimately counterproductive. This is because the market is the worst enemy of good resource management. The market mechanism invariably proves efficient enough to absorb large quantities of fish and can thus subvert any management measure, however worthwhile.

For certain species of fish, it may be difficult to dissuade the fishworker from responding to market signals. This is particularly true in the case of shrimp, tuna and cephalopods—species that enjoy strong demand in international markets. This fact underscores how important—and difficult —it is to delineate a lucid policy on fisheries and food security. In countries of the South, different policy matrices can be constructed, depending on whose food security is on the agenda. Thus it is important to develop a judicious programme for fishing communities that spells out regional priorities, based on social and economic considerations. Simultaneously, such a programme should also address the consumption requirements of local consumers. The over-riding objective—necessarily double-headed and thus somewhat contradictory—should be the welfare of both fishworkers and underprivileged consumers. Clearly, this is a difficult goal. But it will never be reached if two vital aspects are forgotten: better management and allocation of fishery stocks, and greater protection of fish habitats.

Women net weavers

Weaving a living

The women net weavers of Vigia in Brazil face a bleak future, as modern developments overshadow their traditional skills

In numerous countries, the presence of women is felt more in post-harvest activities in fisheries. However, in the port of Vigia in the province of Para in Brazil, women have only a minor role in this area. The majority of them weave fishing nets.

This activity is perceived as being just a part of routine domestic activities like managing the house, cooking, looking after the children and maintaining the kitchen garden. This is because it is done at home and only after all the daily chores have been carried out.

The women of Vigia do not know how to repair nets, nor do they try to learn to do so. They say that repairing is much more difficult than weaving; that is why it is left to the men.

But the fact is that it is a result of the division of labour dictated by constraints of space and occupation. As it is not necessary to have a large area to weave, this activity keeps the women at home and limits their movements. In contrast, repairing of nets requires vast spaces and is a domain of men.

This spatial division springs from cultural norms prevalent in Vigia. These are sometimes applied with rigour. Some fishermen choose to live in greater difficulty than accept the fact that their wives work out in the open.

Men are deemed to have a role to play, which is to fulfill economic obligations. But a woman's revenue is often viewed as a supplement to her husband's salary. However, in numerous communities, they contribute to a large, if not greater extend, to the family's resources, since the fisherman's revenue is by nature uncertain.

Since the market for female labour is very weak in Vigia and orders for weaving nets are becoming very rare, the women have come up with different strategies to survive. They wash clothes or cook for others, while those who have a refrigerator—which is even rarer—sell ice cream or cold juices, and some other sell corn soup. They also undertake some harvest activities in shallow-water fisheries—on banks of rover or near the beach, the high seas being a fishing territory reserved for men.

In Vigia, some women harvest the *siri* crab in the river, the turu mollusc and the caranguejo crab in the mangrove, by setting traps along the banks. They fish individually or in the company of their husbands, fathers or friends, mainly to nourish their families, but eventually to sell their produce. This money earned enables them to survive when their husbands are at sea.

These incursions into the world of fisheries are, however, very limited. Many women remain at home. Their daily activities continue to be preparing meals, washing clothes, fetching water, weaving nets, making ice, etc. All these are activities which retain them in the world of women.

Although the weaving of nets enables the women of Vigia to play a role in the fisheries economy of their community, their work is still not recognized as being a true profession.

Professionalism rare

Rare are those who speak of a 'profession' and who think of enrolling in a

professional organization such as the colia (an organization aimed at registering fishermen and collecting subscriptions for retirement benefits) or IBAMA (Brazilian Institute for the Protection of Environment) which grants permission to fish. It is difficult to estimate the number of weavers in Vigia since all the women from a family invariably know how to weave.

This source of income—meagre but essential for the maintenance of an economic balance—is, however, being threatened now. Plastic nets, made in China, are slowly replacing the traditional nylon nets. Although female labour is cheap, it can not compete with the production costs of industrial net manufacture.

What impact will the introduction of new technology have on female employment? Will the consequences be identical to those already observed in other areas of the world where unemployment has become rampant: the disappearance of women weavers, or a greater exploitation of female labour? These are the questions that will plague the women of Vigia in the years to come.

This article is written by Christine Escallier, ethnologist, and Maria Cristina Maneschy, sociologist and the Brazil co-ordinator of the Women of Fisheries Project of ICSF. It is translated by Malavika Shivakumar.

Still beyond the mainstream

Though women play an important role in Cambodia's fisheries, their problems are usually ignored

As a result of several decades of internal war, women make up between 60 to 65 percent of Cambodia's adult population. They play a vital role in the economy. In addition to regular family activities, they contribute significantly to all sectors of food production, such as processing, preservation and marketing.

To study the traditional role of women in Cambodian fisheries, PADEK (Partnership for Development in Cambodia), together with the authorities of the province of Prey Veng, recently organized a national workshop on Women in Cambodian Fisheries.

The workshop explored the changes that are taking place in the development of technology and in social life, and how these changes are affecting the lives of women. It evaluated existing fisheries programmes to see whether they are gender-sensitive, and analyzed the factors that affect the participation of women in fisheries.

Women are equally involved in catching and processing fish for family consumption in the subsistence fishery, which constitutes almost half the national fishery production of 100,000 tonnes.

In the large-scale fishery, which uses different and distinct types of fishing gear, women provide considerable assistance in subsidiary occupations, such as mending nets, preparing various fishing gear and bait.

The processing and marketing sectors area largely dominated by women. Due to the special nature of the fishery, a large quantity of fish is harvested during a short period of time, lasting just two to three months. This huge fish harvest is processed and preserved almost entirely by women.

As a consequence of women's involvement in the processing and preservation sectors, post-harvest loss of fish is almost negligible. In the fish marketing sector, much of the retail trade is carried out through the involvement of women.

However, little developmental effort has attempted to solve the problems faced by women in this sector. Women continue to be exposed to various health risks during fish processing.

In the marketing sector, poor transport facilities and strongly fluctuating currency rates have been causing women enormous inconvenience. Few women are employed in fisheries education and research, or in the development sector.

The workshop concluded with various recommendations to support and strengthen the role of women in Cambodia's fisheries.

This piece is based on a report by PADEK, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Maritimes fisheries

Let's fix it

The SW Nova Fixed Gear Association has proposed an action plan to deal with the problems being faced by Canada's Maritimes fisheries

Canada, with the longest coastline in the world, and the second largest continental shelf, controls an offshore area of more than 65 million sq km. Not surprisingly, fishing has been an important economic activity of Canada's coastal population.

However, with the over-harvesting of fish resources and the acute degradation of the aquatic environment, Canada has seen the collapse and closure of some of its important fisheries. Perhaps the most drastic has been the collapse of Atlantic groundfish stocks.

The impact on fishers has been equally drastic. It is estimated that over 40,000 fishers and fish plant workers have been rendered jobless as a consequence. The industry is being propped up by government subsidies.

Viewpoints that have attributed the decline of fish resources to natural causes and to factors beyond human control, have been contested. It is alleged that such views attempt to make or gloss over the damage caused by groundfish dragging in the 1960s and 1970s, by foreign and domestic freezer draggers.

There is a pressing need to restructure the fishing industry, drawing from the lesson of history. An alternative management system, based on the principles of co-management needs to be instituted. The approach should focus on how, when and where to fish, rather than on how much fish should be caught. The restructuring should also be based on economic principles which ensure that the industry remains both competitive and remunerative.

A revamped management system should be designed to achieve the following:

- sustainability of the fish and their ecosystems;
- efficiency in maximising the economic exploitation of the resource;
- stability for coastal communities; and
- self-reliance, not reliance on public money.

The need for co-management, to recognize and respect the deep knowledge fishers possess about the marine ecosystem, has been emphasized. However, co-management is possible and workable only between partners who are equally strong and committed.

The current reality in which in all decision-making power rests with the Minister of Fisheries and his department, has to be changed, and more equitable power sharing arrangements have to be worked out. More powers need to be vested in fishers and their representatives.

This raises another related issue—the need for strong representative organizations of independent fishers. At present, these enjoy limited membership and suffer from a chronic paucity of funds. The enactment of supportive legislation, which makes it necessary for fishworkers to join professional organizations representing their interests, may be required.

Equal partners

Also, if fishers are to perceive themselves as equal partners in the co-management process, they need to develop a more positive attitude about themselves and their profession. This calls for the proper education and training of fishers in the

context of maritime realities and an acceptance of minimum standards for those who are going to fish. There needs to be a focus on strategies and technologies for fishing that minimize both the potential for abuse and the cost of enforcement. The qualifications and skills of registered fishers need to be upgraded.

Co-management can be potentially advantageous. The direct involvement of fishers will force them to be fully informed about the issues at hand and will contribute o responsible and knowledgeable decision—making.

At the same tome, a greater sense of ownership of the resource will be fostered; leading to fewer violations and malpractices. Under co-management, enforcement can be more effective and more attuned to the different nature of violations in various areas. Scientists will be able to work in partnership with fishers and to pool together their expertise.

The numerical approach to fisheries management, which stipulates the quantity of fish that can be caught, has been accused of being short-sighted and inadequate.

This is partly due to the difficulty in predicting catch since marine ecosystems are complex. There are thus fundamental and inherent problems with the current management system, centered around quotas for the amount of fish landed.

This system also fails to controls the amount of fish caught. Violations such as discarding and high grading are commonly observed. It is evident that there are problems both with the approach and its enforcement. There is little attempt to explore the connection between the fishing technology adopted and the decline of fisheries, as for instance, between the use of draggers [trawlers] and the decimation of fish stocks.

Longlining is seen as a superior option to dragging for catching groundfish in a sustainable manner. It is considered a more efficient and less wasteful method. Draggers,for instance, have been accused of damaging fish and squashing them. There is evidence to indicate that dragging damages oceans beds, disturbs spawning fish and reproductive activity, and results in catches of 'sick' fish, that is, fish, which have spawned only once and which are underweight.

Restricted catches

The use of hooks, on the other hand, ensures that fewer fish of better quality are caught so that the volume of catches is restricted. At the same time, regulations related to hook size are more easily enforceable. Equally important, longlining provides employment to a greater number of people.

It is, therefore desirable, and even imperative, that dragging be given up in favour of longlining. This will also deal with the problem of overcapacity, and, at the same time, will provide work for boatyards.

The tenets of conservation fishery require that

- spawning and nursery areas be protected;
- only sexually mature fish that have spawned only once be caught;
- the brood-stock contains a significant number of large spawners; and
- different species be targeted at different times of the year for optimal return.

It is evident that to put the above principles into practice, an in-depth knowledge of the marine environment is called for, as is a fine-tuning of fishing plans to cope with the unpredictable natural world. That this is possible only under localised co-management is evident. A greater co-operation between scientists and fishers, and a greater use of fishers' anecdotal knowledge, is required. The closure of additional spawning and nursery areas for longer periods of time, the delineation of gear-specific territories and the establishment of several Marine Protection Areas (MPAs) are also required.

A management system based on traditional knowledge needs to be devised to ensure that fishing effort maximizes return from catch. Local co-management will be able to direct fisheries to the best advantage of the stocks, the fishers and their communities, based on fisheries management principles like optimal yield, the encouragement of spawning and the protection of juvenile fish.

The economical goal of a revamped fishery management system should focus on the creation self sustaining, family-supporting jobs. A property regulated private enterprise system, which is productive, profitable and efficient, needs to be devised.

Vertical integration

This will require the delinking of the fish processing from the resource. In other words, the vertical integration evident in the present-day fishing industry needs to be modified. A freely competitive fish processing sector is called for, to encourage the development of smaller, more efficient enterprises, which do not require government subsidies and bail-out to survive.

Ensuring that fish processors are debarred from actual ownership of shipping vessels

will be advantageous in several respects. Processors will be unable to influence or depress market price of fish, ensuring a fair return to actual fishers.

Also, they will be unable to dictate to independent operators of fishing vessels, 'shopping lists' of fish they require to meet the demands of the market. This will eliminate the wastage that results from discarding undesirable species and from high-grading.

A freely competitive fishery sector is also required. This calls for a pro-owner/ operator policy. Owner-operator tends to protect the resource better, due to their greater personal and financial stake in the industry.

Also, the process of privatizing hitherto common marine resources, through the system of granting a limited number of licenses, needs to be checked. These property rights were introduced to reduce excess capacity and thereby overfishing.

But they have only succeeded in paving the way for the formation of monopolies. They have facilitated a concentration in fishery without protection of the resource. Independent owner-operators should be allowed to compete in an environment which regulates how, when and where to fish.

A uniform quality grading system for fish products is also required. This would not only increase consumer acceptance and confidence, but would also reward fishers for adopting quality-enhancing practices.

Incorporation of these suggestions into a new management system would go a long way in restoring the health of the fishing industry. The Canadian taxpayer will no longer be required to subsidize a mismanaged industrial system.

This article, written by Chandrika Sharma of ICSF's Madras office, is based on a document of the same title, prepared by the SW Nova Fixed Gear Association

EU-Morocco accord

Through Spanish eyes

The after-effects of the fishery agreement between the EU and Morocco were felt most by hapless citizens

On 13 November 1995 the European Union (EU) and Morocco signed a draft fisheries agreement, which will run for four years, starting I December 1995, and is worth more than 500 million European Currency Unit (ECU). Emma Bonino, European Commissioner for Fisheries, is reported to have acknowledged, "Morocco also has the right to exploit its own fish resources. We (the EU) have been doing so for years, and they know it. We have overexploited the seas for centuries, something that the Africans have never done."

This new agreement between Morocco and the EU sets a precedent for linking development co-operation to fisheries agreements. Particularly noteworthy are two articles of the agreement, which commit the EU to development co-operation activities with Morocco, and the establishment of a joint committee to oversee the implementation of the agreement.

However, some critics claim that this fisheries agreement has been used as a bargaining chip by both EU and Moroccan negotiators to secure concessions in other areas. For example, as a direct consequence of the agreement, Moroccan oranges have received substantial cuts in import duties and levies imposed by the EU. This is likely to have serious trade distorting effects and is believed to be in contravention of rules framed by the World Trade Organization.

Around 121 million ECUS, or about 24 per cent of the total value of the agreement, are being allocated specifically to development co-operation activities. These include the development of seaside industries and port infrastructure, as well as marketing channels for fish products. They also include measures for environmental protection.

Although the new agreement may be a step forward for EU-Moroccan fishery relations, there are some serious implications for the thousands of Spanish fishworkers dependent on the Moroccan fishing grounds. The signing of this agreement was delayed by over six months, during which time the Moroccan fishing grounds were closed to EU fishing boats.

The Spanish were the ones hit hardest by this, with hundreds of boats and thousands of fish workers thrown out of work. In an unprecedented action, the EU provided affected Spanish fishermen with a 40 million ECU compensation package.

Many fishermen in the Galician region experienced a prolonged period of forced unemployment due to the closure of the fishing grounds while a new agreement was being negotiated. This created much tension in close-knit family groups; their only source of income had been cut off, and there was no certainty about when this would be restored.

Social tensions

There were also social tensions as Spanish fish workers took to the streets, holding protest marches and demonstrations. The government used a heavy hand to stifle these protests, which were declared illegal. Fish workers found themselves on the wrong side of the law. At the same time, they saw few alternatives. Afraid of the counter-measures that might be taken against them, the protesters often hid their identities behind masks and hoods.

In the Christmas 1995 edition of its journal Boga, Rosa dos Ventos, an organization of women from the fishing communities of

Vigo, Spain, has included a number on local perspectives on the Moroccan agreement.

The following excerpts from Boga, of interviews with those affected, reveal how hard those times were-

How did the agreement with Morocco conclude?

The following are some of the elements of this agreement:

- Duration: renewable after a four-year period.
- Closed seasons: the same as in the previous agreement.
- Moroccan crews: slight increases, equivalent to one per boat more than at present.
- Cost: the EU will pay around 20,000 million pesetas (about US$ 1,700 million) annually.
- Licence fees: there will be an increase of 5 per cent in each of the last three years of the agreement.
- Landings in Moroccan ports: only refers to cephalopods, and will amount to 25 per cent every year.
- Average reduction in Gross Registered Tonnage: 23 per cent.

As a result of these prolonged negotiations, the EU has implemented some compensatory measures, such as fleet restructuring (in our view, over the longer term) and compensation (but for whom?). The European Council approved support for the boats, which had been laid off.

The agreement is largely regarded as unfavourable for the fleet. It will mean a considerable loss of work opportunities and lead to the berthing of many boats. The unemployment brought on by the delay in signing, which was over six months, has provoked a tough response

from the fishermen. The consequence of this agreement will be a significant restructuring of the sector. Our fleet will gradually have to face up to this reality.

The apparent stability promised by the agreement for a four-year period, with no intermediate revision, is a mitigating factor in the bleak future of the fleet fishing the Saharan grounds.

Once again, our fishery sector has suffered the consequences of having been used as a bargaining chip for other interests-to open up markets for fruit, vegetables and tinned sardines. These negotiations have demonstrated the weakness of the Spanish government, in the face of pressures exerted on the EU negotiators by other community countries.

Jorge Paredes is a fisherman from Cangas in the region of Morrazo. At sea since the age of 15, he has worked on many fishing grounds and for 20 years, he has been fishing for cephalopods in the Canary-Saharan fishing grounds.

The dispute over the agreement with Morocco has kept him at home for over six months, something, which he is not used to. The forced unemployment has left him worried about the future, which is still uncertain.

We met him at his home with his wife and children, and we took the opportunity to talk about daily life at sea. This is how he replied to our questions:

After a day spent steaming from our base in Las Palmas, we begin to work the fishing gears (setting and hauling our nets every three hours). The nets easily catch on the bottom during these operations. Sometimes we lose everything and sometimes the nets get completely torn. Then we have to rig another net.

After hauling, the nets are laid on the deck and the work of clearing them begins. This process involves gutting the fish, sorting and packing them prior to freezing. This is what we do between setting and hauling the nets, as well as repairing the torn gear. Any time left over is for eating and resting. There are no shifts. On deck there are 10 seamen, and eight between the hold and the bridge. It's the same for everyone, day and night, throughout the entire campaign, which may last between 50 and 120 days.

There's no time for anything, not even to listen to the radio; its another world, like living in a capsule. From time to time, it is possible to rest your weary legs without actually sleeping. It's a kind of dream world, where you live half awake and half asleep.

As far as earnings are concerned, we take a share rather than a fixed wage. Seamen are paid 10 per cent of the earnings. We never know until the end how much that is worth. The average earnings are 150,000 pesetas. It is a kind of donkey's work that very few can bear. Men from the countryside crack up during the first campaign. We seafarers believe that we have it in our blood, inherited from our grandparents, who also went to sea. Or perhaps it's because we begin as children and our bodies become used to it. We are also driven by the need to earn a living.

We spoke with Jorge about many other things. Our discussions should not end here, because there are so many amazing things to learn about this kind of life and work. The words 'to learn are hardly appropriate, as one can not really learn about these things unless one actually experiences them first hand. The reality is that none of us on land should be allowed to say that we know about life at sea.

Such accounts as given by the likes of Jorge make a big impression on us when we hear them. They may remain in our memories long after they have gone to sea. But ultimately our memories fade, like them, into the sea.

Fita and Loli are the wives and Patricia, the daughter, of fishermen who were struggling to defend their work on the Moroccan fishing grounds. They narrated to us their experiences during the families' times of uncertainty:

What has the Moroccan conflict meant for you?

Loli: I lived through it under a lot of strain, always looking for solutions. We

wondered how we could explain the meaning of our protests and marches. Our cry was: "Don't ignore us! We are here because we need to work." We were not talking about money, just about having some hope of returning to some form of dignified work. People showed us no solidarity. We were even criticized by the very organizations that we had formed, although we never tried to harm anyone. We have lived in total impotence.

Fita: It was the same for us. Everywhere we found doors closed. When we were called for meetings, we were promised many things. They told us everything was rosy, but all we could see was black. The truth is that it is difficult to explain in words.

How was life at home?

Fita: It's not that we lived very badly, in the sense that I had all my children with me. We explained what was going on, although often we did not tell them everything so that they would not worry about this enormous problem.

My husband and I fell out because he was very ill, and any little thing provoked him. We always ended up arguing. Those were very anxious days, seeing my husband go without sleep, although I slept less due to the knot I had in my stomach, which would rise to my throat and seem to throttle me. It is difficult to explain because everything was so acute, so big, so powerful, that I wondered how on earth it could be sorted out. And I cried alone, searching for some solution. It was like trying to take a bull by the horns, but not being strong enough to do so.

The authorities say they gave you sufficient support.

Fita: Sufficient? If any government functionary, or even a minister, can live with 75 or 100 thousand pesetas, with a family of six, then he should come here and explain how to, because I don't know how to do so.

How did you help your husband?

Fita: Accompanying them everywhere, to the demonstrations, to the protest actions, and telling them that things would work out. At those times, I was the strength, because he cracked up before me. Also, I had the support of our children.

How did society react?

Fita: "That was much worse. I had confrontations with many people, but I know how to keep quiet when I have to, although I explained the reasons for our actions. Wherever we went, there were strike-breakers and I wondered why. I felt powerless. For instance, why did they stop five of us from entering the Labour Office? Where is the democracy in this?

The truth is that everyone closed their doors to us, and this was the worst injustice.

How did the children cope?

Patricia: At the start, we hardly noticed any difference. We saw our father corning home and we did not know when he would leave. When you see your father coming home from sea, you always hope that he will give you what you need, like new clothes. But this was different, because, as his stay at home got longer, and knowing what was going on, we were no longer able to ask for things that we had always taken for granted.

Things were not very clear for us kids. We depended on our father completely, as there was no other income. The atmosphere was tense. When we spoke, he shouted at us to shut up! Previously, our father had never taken against us. Now every little thing, even a joke, was seen as an argument.

We always helped our fathers when there was any discussion, whatever the theme. They never allowed us to go with them into the streets; to the demonstrations, yes, but when there was a protest march, we stayed at home with the radio on until they returned.

What happened on the marches?

Fita: For us, it was a unique-experience. We found ourselves persecuted by the strike- breakers in an incredible way. They were armed to the teeth and they followed us everywhere. They were already waiting for us when we left the boats.

Loli: We did nothing that called for the protection of the people.

Patricia: On hearing such things, we waited in trepidation, wondering if our fathers would come home safely. When they went out, they told us "Take care, don't turn out the lights, let no one go to the window", because the police were always watching the house and had the phones tapped.

Loli: The strike-breakers, and even the Governor, thought that they were dealing with uneducated, crazy and ignorant people. They did not realize what was being planned or how well organized we were. The fishermen took them quite by surprise. While the strike-breakers had many resources, and the fishermen had none, other than the capacity to think and act, we were able to outsmart them in every sense.

Fita: They treated us like real delinquents. When we went to see the Governor, I told him personally that he had visited my home, that he knew my husband, who had now masked his identity, and all my family. There are so many amazing stories

to be told about those times. After all these happenings, we realize how much there still is to learn about life. What a lot we still have to learn!

How are you facing up to the future?

Loli: For the time being, we see no future, because the outcome is unjust and has left us full of hunger and frustration. The ensuing anxiety and all the other tensions have repercussions on the children. They realize that we are not sleeping and that we have lost our appetites. I try to explain things as simply as possible, because I don't want them to have to go through the same problems.

I have a son on the same fishing ground. He phoned to tell me that a Moroccan had cut his finger. The thought that he was fighting with them filled me with disgust. He told me not to worry, that it was a very small cut, and he was happy.

I feel so impotent facing the future. There has to be some solution, but before we can see any results, we have to use whatever strength we have to defend ourselves, to face up to other governments. It seems that there is no alternative...

Fita: I don't believe that we can continue to fish, because we're getting less and less, and it doesn't matter to anybody, because they are trying to deprive us of fishing. I don't know what the future holds or what alternatives people will have. Where are we going to look for fish, if, as they say, all the fishing grounds are overfished? The solution that we had was in this fishing ground and now that is also failing us.

What alternatives do you see for the young?

Fita: Young people will have to struggle if there is no' work at sea. They will have to struggle for it on land, to struggle to set up businesses, for which the government must lend them money. But it is not doing anything and we don't see alternatives.

Patricia: In our house, all of us children are old enough. We continue studying only because we have not found work and we are taking advantage of the time to make more of ourselves. This is what my father says: "I have some older children whose future could have almost been determined, but that hasn't happened". He sees very bleak prospects because he is the only person providing an income for the household.

These excerpts are translated from the Christmas 1995 edition of Boga, published by Rosa Dos Ventos, based in Vigo in Galicia, north-west Spain

Nazare fishery

'Who's not rowing, has rowed already'

Despite changes wrought by modernization, the fishing community of Nazare would like to cling on to its roots

Nazare is located 135 km north of Lisbon, on the Atlantic coast. Until 1985, it functioned as a natural port. The boats used to be beached on the seaside and all the activities related to fishing-sorting, processing and sale of fish-would take place in the vicinity of the shore.

At the start of the 1980s, Portugal expressed its desire to enter the European Economic Community (EEC). Portugal became a member of the EEC in 1986. This event marked a turning point in the organization of the country's fishing industry, which then became the focus of a revival that promised real progress for the national economy.

A special plan to modernize the national ports was begun. Investments in harbour installations were five times more than for the rest of the fishery sector. Priority targets were the modernization of infrastructure and the mechanization of auctions, which lightened the labour of the men.

In 1983, a harbour complex was begun in Nazare. It was inaugurated in 1985. In the meantime, the location of this harbour-in the suburbs and no longer in the centre of town-implied that the people of Nazare would soon be faced with domestic changes.

Their economic and social life underwent a great transformation, particularly with the inauguration of computerized auctions. This also forced the fishermen to re-define their organizations.

"The fishermen's community soon found itself involved in far-reaching political and economic developments. What influences would national and international policies have on the resources and lives of the fishermen and their families, and on the identity of the Nazare community? This was the question that seemed to trouble most people in the community.

Nationally, the building of harbour complexes in Portugal coincided with a plan to restructure the country's fishing fleet by trimming its size by over 40 per cent in three years. The first to be affected by this decree were the traditional Nazare boats, which had no decks and were propelled by small outboard engines. In size, 85 per cent of them would be under two CRT.

Historically, in the 18th century, the native population of Poderneira was colonized by fishermen who came from the north of Portugal. The fusion of these two maritime communities-one fishing with lines and the other with nets-was possible since these two techniques did not conflict in the fishing ground.

The migrant fishermen, that is, the latecomers, showed a remarkable sense of adaptation to the environment, adapting their fishing and sailing gear to local geographic and ecological parameters. This is evident in the last of the 'Candil' purse-seiners, used for small-scale fishing. Their style is a throwback to the boatbuilding history of the community.

Further, these fishermen have been able to adapt themselves to the new situation by borrowing methods from other ports of Europe.

Large purse-seiners

Examples are the arrival of the large 'Galea' purse-seiners (over 15 m in length and propelled by six pairs of oars) at the start of the 20th century, and of the first steamboats in the 1920s, which grew

greatly In numbers just a year after their introduction.

These migrant fishermen could also raise production by diversifying the use of territories. The existence of a common interest between the two groups of fishermen fuelled a fast osmosis. This has created a group united by the sea, and whose fishing techniques are still technically and economically distinctive.

Immersed in an environment and a lifestyle noticeably different from those of land-based people, the identity of the fishermen of Nazare bears the unmistakable mark of the sea.

Equally at home with both lines and nets, the Nazareans exploit very different fishing areas, each having its own specificities in terms of the means of production, gear or the hierarchical organization of crews.

Among the crew, the boatowner or the 'patron' plays an essential role. The introduction of navigation instruments on the inboard powered boats has changed the very basis of the owner's know-how, shifting it from the empirical to the technical.

But the former skills have remained intact among the boatowners who still fish according to the techniques of their ancestors.

The crews comprise specialists as well as ordinary operators. This differentiation is less pronounced aboard the smaller units, where the multifaceted skills of the men elicit co-operation among the crew members.

In Nazare, it is difficult to distinguish a worker from his partner or associate, particularly when the owner is also part of the crew and employs a few members of his own family.

These binding family relations and the predominance of independent work in this sector explain the diverse ways in which capital and labour combine in the exploitation of the fishery.

Even if, traditionally, the composition of crews was based on family ties, some economic and social circumstances-notably, the lack of work and, lately, the refusal of sons to follow in the footsteps of their fathers-have modified these arrangements. Commonly, the employer and owner of the fishing boat will transfer ownership to his own son, whom he usually employs on board.

Also, over the years, numerous wrecks have prompted the fathers to be more prudent. They now choose to keep their sons away from the boats so as to prevent the risk of a multiple bereavement which could destroy an entire family and reduce it to misery.

At present, apart from some attempts by family associations -which often cease abruptly due to generations-old confrontations-the percentage of family members working in the same crew is almost nil. This is now a characteristic feature of the organization of Nazare crews.

Today, in most cases, the crews comprise locals who are not related to the boatowner, but who are usually linked by strong bonds of comradeship. They are all bound by the events which occur to the crew, and it is on this unity that the fishermen base their strength.

The practice of fishing is constant all year round. The boatowner redistributes the catch among all those who have taken part in the fishing activities, both at sea and ashore.

However, bad weather and difficulty of access to fishing grounds, especially for the small boats which work near the shore, are handicaps which the presence of a port has not been able to overcome.

The experience and know-how of the fishermen of Nazare are acknowledged by shipowners and fishing societies from other ports of Portugal. The community has built a reputation for its work and its courage. This is their only reward, not a tangible rise in the incomes of fishing families.

Traditionally, the town is also a source for the supply of labour. The Nazareans are especially numerous in the crews of cod-fishing boats. They are known to be excellent technicians, specialists in line fishing, while those who practise purse-seining are much sought after for the exceptional quality of the fish they catch.

The social organization of the fishermen community was based on a division of labour by which men worked only at sea. This became more pronounced since the beginning of the 20th century, when one of their erstwhile tasks, the transporting of fish from the port to the market, was relegated to the women.

One production unit

The fisherman's family was a true production unit, where all aspects of fishing took place. Men were responsible for the fishing gear and navigation devices, and for the actual fishing, while the women remained ashore and participated in the transport, processing and sale of the fish. They also did some fishing near the shore, using shore-seines, or in the river's estuary. All this was, of course, in addition to the traditional domestic duties. Nonetheless, women continued to be influential members of the community.

However, as a consequence of the development of Nazare's fishery sector,

women have disappeared from the complementary activities connected with the fishery. There has been a redefinition of their roles and status within the community.

Until 1930, the auctions in Nazare used to take place close to the landing site. The fisherwomen would bring their baskets down to the auctions, which were conducted directly on the shore.

But, slowly, the auction sites moved farther and farther away from the landing area. Simultaneously, the task of transporting fish from the landing centre to the new auction centre and also to the processing plants fell on women, who came to be called *cabezeiras* in Portuguese (literally meaning headloaders). In other parts of Portugal, however, it was still the fishermen who transported fish to the auctions and processing plants.

Until the 1950s, the social organization of the fishermen's community remained unchanged, with long-standing traditions and heritage transmitted from one generation to the other. Still, there did occur a transformation of the fabric of Nazare society. While the fishermen's population dwindled into a minority, the numbers of land-based people increased. Alongside, some new economic activities appeared, while older ones were improved and developed.

In 1950, the distribution of the working population of Nazare was thus: 59 percent in the primary sector (mainly fishery), 15 per cent in the secondary sector and 26 per cent in the tertiary sector (the national average being, respectively, 43 per cent, 24 per cent and 27 per cent). In the secondary sector, the manpower was distributed mainly between the food industry (5 per cent), construction (6 per cent) and the textile industry (5 per cent). In the tertiary sector, trade (II per cent) and services (3 per cent) dominated.

Fishery-related activities have evolved over the years. Today, there are two fish canning factories in Nazare, which together employ 104 female workers. Small firms exist alongside some large firms which distribute marine products beyond the areas already covered by the tradeswomen of Nazare. The owners of these larger firms are not themselves fishermen. This marks a break-up in the traditional organization of the fish markets of Nazare and opens the way for 'non-native' fish dealers.

The women are gradually abandoning distribution activities. Walking, riding donkeys or using lightweight carts, they can not compete with professional firms equipped with modern distribution systems. Only those women who can invest in a driving licence and can afford a delivery van will remain in the market, increase their incomes and differentiate themselves from the other women of the fishing community through some external signs of wealth: the ownership of gold Jewellery or even lodgings to be let out to tourists.

The other women will have to limit their roles to a family economy, or become employees in the tertiary sector, where operations linked to tourism create mostly female employment. Hotels, restaurants, and food and souvenir stalls are the areas where the wives and daughters of the fishermen can be seen today.

It was from the period 1985-90 onwards that the women began to turn to activities from which they had so far been abstaining. They started attending courses for licences to fish or mend nets. Previously, mending nets was a typically male domain.

The women have slowly left all the sectors originally meant for them unloading, sorting and processing fish, and selling at auctions in the local or regional markets. This change has come about not only because these activities have been shifted from the village, as the harbour complex has taken over the activities of the fishing economy.

The change is also because fishing activities are now dominated by men. Fish processing is today totally in the hands of large firms, except for a few old women who still undertake traditional drying.

More mate involvement

More and more men are engaged in different stages of fish processing and marketing. Dealing in fish has become a

male profession, after having remained essentially a female task. Today the only activity that the fishermen of Nazare continue on shore is the making and mending of nets.

Thanks to the reputation of the quality of the sardines and fish of Nazare, which have crossed local and regional borders, a market economy has developed.

Distribution networks, initially very localized, are operated by the Nazare women. They function at various levels: the street, the quarter and the town. The status and role of the women enable them to create networks of exchange of goods as well as information.

Compared to the feverish activity of the women, one could easily call the fishermen indolent, even lazy, when they are ashore such is their inactivity.

However, it should be remembered that their courage, energy and perseverance while at sea should be seen in the context of a social and economical organization where each individual has a clearly defined role. This way, the sexual division of labour is justified in terms of collaboration towards some goals of social and economic balance.

These changes have transformed the traditional lifestyle of the Nazare community. At present, the fishermen and their families are a minority among the other categories which make up the Nazare population, namely, officers, clerks, artisans, contractors, doctors, painters and writers.

But what still unites the fishing community is the old adage 'Who's not rowing, has rowed already.' All of them the 'naked feet' and the 'shod feet', as they are popularly known, that is, fishermen and non-fishermen stem from the same roots. All their ancestors have had in common the fact of being fishermen.

It must be remembered that the Nazareans are originally a population of fishermen. That is the essential identity they wish to preserve and the one they want others to accord them.

This article, written by ethnologist Christine Escallier, has been translated from French by Roberta Valente

Fishermen's Wives Association

Women lead the way

The fishing community of Gloucester, Massachusetts may well improve its fortunes, thanks to its politically charged women

In 1969, a group of determined women established an association in Gloucester, Massachusetts, the US. Called the Gloucester Fishermen's Wives Association (GFWA), its purpose was to protect and promote the Gloucester and New England fishing industry as well as work to improve the quality of life for fishing families.

In Gloucester, fishing vessels and businesses are family-owned. One of the original objectives of GFWA was to establish a co-operative. As word of these plans got around in the community, local fish processors began to threaten the fishermen. If they were to form any co-operative with the wives, the processors warned, the fishermen would not be able to do business with them. Hence, many participants abandoned the effort out of fear. As a result, the co-operative was never formed.

GFWA also championed the concept of a 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) to allow the nation to protect and manage local fisheries for the benefit of coastal communities. This was necessary because in the late 1960s and early 1970s, foreign factory trawlers were 'vacuum cleaning' the fishing grounds off New England and depleting fish stocks which local communities depended on for their future.

Members went to Washington to testify in Congress to support the enactment of legislation for the EEZ. Since then, all nations have adopted the 200-mile limit.

Nevertheless, at the US national policy level, the push for economic efficiency in seafood harvesting is making it more and more difficult for small-scale fishers to survive economically. This thrust is disguised behind a mask of conservation rhetoric. Consequently, the general public is quite confused by fisheries debates.

GFWA represents small-scale fishing families who lack the financial and organizational resources to influence economic and regulatory policy which favours more efficient harvesting. Most of the conservation rules which are imposed to save fish stocks cause plenty of economic damage to fishing families, while doing little to reduce fish mortality.

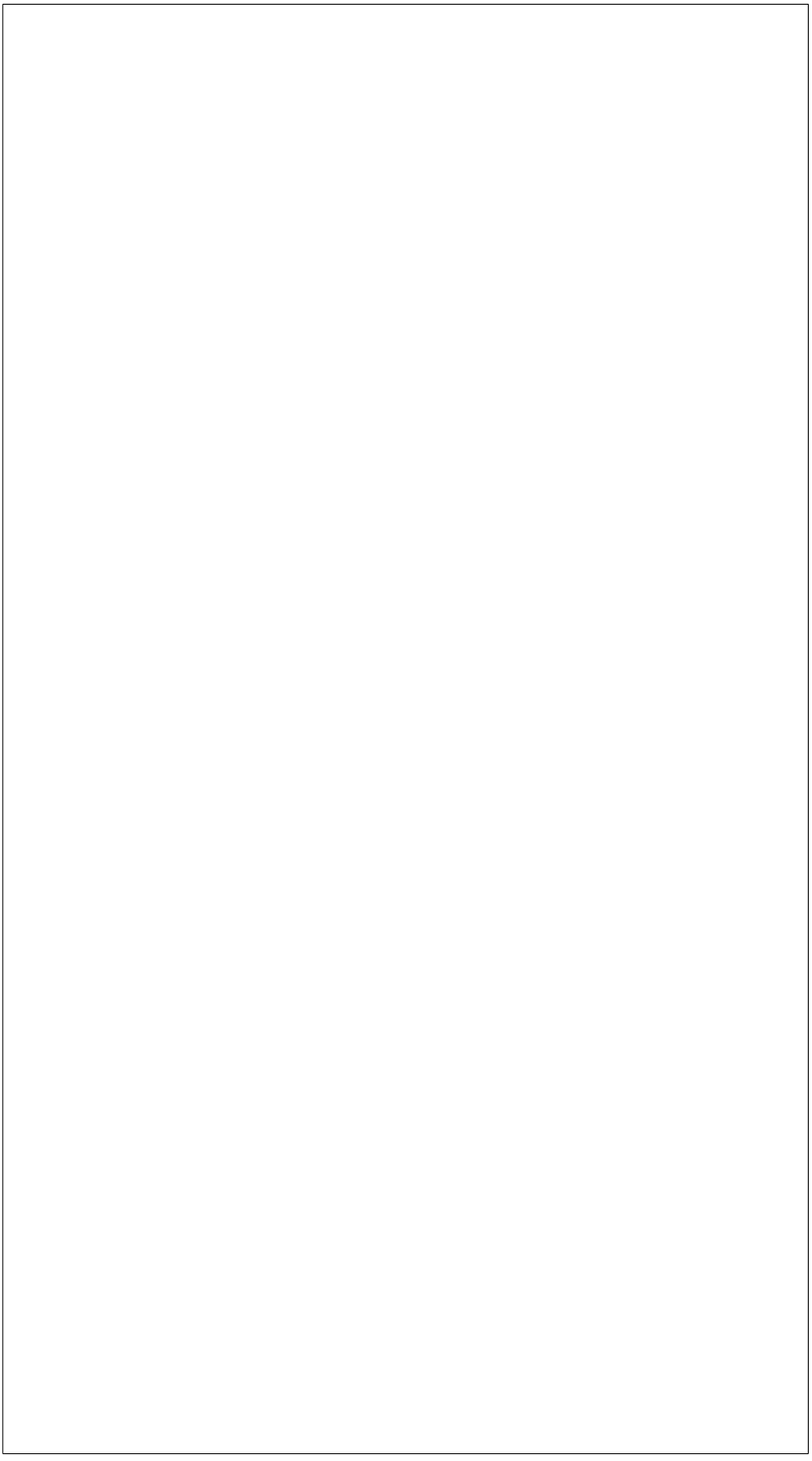
The policy is usually summed up in a few words: 'There are too many fishermen chasing too few fish.' Many observers note that the regulations enforce a reduction in fishing capacity by driving families into financial ruin.

The public normally accepts this policy and fishermen have been depicted as greedy rapists of the sea who care about nothing other than instant short-term profits. This image is promoted everywhere-from children's feature films to national news broadcasts. Children of fishermen in Gloucester come home from school asking why their daddies are doing bad things to the fish.

Government rule-making, which is often manipulated by outside economic interests, promotes conflicts among fishermen who use different fishing methods, by favouring one group over another. This makes it very difficult for the fishermen to unite their efforts to defend their own interests.

Organizational capacity

The GFWA has begun to work towards helping the fishermen resolve these conflicts among themselves. To do this, we are building up the organizational capacity to bring family-owned fish businesses together.



Our goal is to work together with as many as possible, in order to clarify the issues for public debate, to leverage economic benefits for our businesses, to influence government policy-making and to illuminate the many hidden costs to the public of consolidating seafood harvesting too narrowly.

To begin building up our organization, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston and Bernard Cardinal Law, Archbishop of Boston, have helped us with money and co-operation.

The Archdiocesan health care system, Caritas Christi, is committed to working with us to develop an affordable health insurance program for fishing people.

This economic benefit will be provided to members of our affiliated fishing associations. By offering affordable health care through affiliated fishing associations, we hope to a build up membership in local grass-roots organizations as well as encourage them to collaborate at a regional level.

This is only the beginning. Another of our goals is to connect with organizations like the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers.

Each September, we hold an International Conference of Women in Fisheries. Until now, most of those who attend have been from the US and Canada, since we share the same fisheries, despite human-made political barriers.

These conferences have been very useful from a' number of viewpoints. Women from Canada, in particular, have warned of the serious negative consequences of simply providing welfare to fishermen so they can stay home from fishing. The social and family consequences of this Canadian policy have been disastrous.

Until recently, the fishermen in Gloucester too have refused to follow the leadership of their wives, even though the women have become much more politically effective in ways the men never had time to develop. The fishermen did not even want to admit or try to understand all the achievements the Wives Association accomplished on their behalf.

Many of the fishermen still blame the wives for causing their problems by participating in the political debate. Many fishermen have little or no understanding of the issues, or what their problems would be, had the wives not been fighting for them for the 26 years since GFWA was established.

New relationships

Now, a segment of the fishermen are looking to the organization to help them. This new relationship, expressed by membership in GFWA, is opening new possibilities to alter history. The experiences, talents and skills of the fishermen, their wives and other stakeholders from the community, are being blended in a common action plan. It is exciting and, at the same time, very hard work. Hopefully, we are not too late to save the fishing cultures in our coastal communities of Massachusetts and New England.

This piece is written by David Bergeron, who works with the Gloucester Fishermen's Wives Association

Women in fisheries

In the sea of women's concerns

The NGO Forum on Women, held during the Fourth World Conference on Women, in China was a historic event

The NGO Forum on Women, held from 30 August to 8 September 1995, in Huiarou, China, drew nearly 30,000 participants, mostly women. This forum was related to, but independent of, the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, which was the largest meeting ever convened under UN auspices, with 17,000 persons registering.

It was hardly possible to recognize Huiarou as a Chinese host town for the Forum, since it was overflowing with almost 30,000 women from all corners of the world. Yet, a Chinese host was always to be found when needed for translation, advice on transportation or where to eat, or to solve other problems of the participants and they were always typically friendly and polite.

The town of Huiarou was beautifully dressed up for the occasion, with flowers and banners to welcome the Forum participants. One of the kindergartens of the town was put at the disposal of the children of the participants and the local hospital was turned into an emergency station for the Forum. All in all, the whole town seemed to be at the service of this international event.

More than 3,000 activities were scheduled, with each attracting participants numbering from 30 to 1,500. The activities covered presentations and discussions of all kinds of women's issues, from as diverse fields as the economy and the environment, to spirituality and sexual orientation.

Any individual or group had the opportunity to apply for space and equipment for any activity related to women. Thus, the programme was highly diverse and allowed many groups with conflicting positions to propagate their activities side by side. Besides the 30,000 workshops, there were rich cultural programmes as well as a general morning assembly focusing on different major global and international women's issues which were scheduled to be further negotiated at the official UN Conference.

Amidst these myriad issues were four of us women a Gambian, two Scandinavians and an Indian all women from fisheries, who had scheduled a workshop entitled 'Women in Fishing: Food Producers of Today and Tomorrow'. We took this initiative on behalf of the women's group in the ICSF with the hope of establishing new contacts as well as to push the issue of women in fisheries on to the agendas of international NGO forums on women.

Clearly, fisheries were not one of the major issues originally proposed for the Forum. Yet, six different groups had scheduled activities in this area. Furthermore, there were plenty of other workshops which would be of interest for women in fisheries, such as presentations on small-scale credit systems, discussions on gender bias in access to natural resources, as well as women's integration or marginalization in rural development.

Overlapping workshops

On the very first day of the Forum, at the very first session, there was an overlap of workshops on fisheries. And immediately afterwards, at the second session, a third fisheries workshop had been scheduled.

We arrived with enthusiasm in Huiarou but just 15 minutes before everything started. So we had to hurry to orient ourselves and locate the venues of the various activities. Anna, the Gambian, and I, one of the Scandinavians, each set

out for one or the other of the overlapping workshops.

The one titled "The Worldwide Crisis in Fisheries and its Impact on Women and the Community' was arranged by a network of Canadian women, the Nova Scotia Women's Fishnet.

As we had just arrived at the Forum site and had to familiarize ourselves by getting a map and trying to locate the activities, I was able to make it only towards the close of the workshop. In an open-air tent, around 10 women were discussing excitedly.

After a hurried exchange of addresses, I had to rush for the next workshop, called 'Women's Role in Promoting Sustainable Fisheries and Ecosystems', arranged by the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen. But the conveners never showed up unfortunately, they had not arrived at all.

Anna never made it for her first morning workshop either, which was titled 'Aquaculture: Food Fish for Growing Populations'. She had to first find the kindergarten to drop off her daughter, Isatou, who, at the age of one and a half, may have been the youngest woman at the Forum.

Unfortunately, that was neither the first nor the last tune we showed up at events which had been cancelled or changed. In such a huge forum, where there was no centralized control, all the conveners of the different activities were themselves responsible for reporting changes, to be printed in the daily Forum newspaper.

Yet, precisely due to its decentralized and open nature and the great number of overlapping activities, the Forum was a challenging event. One had to participate fully in whatever event one found oneself in and not worry too much about whether something going on elsewhere could be more relevant. Since several women's issues are interlinked and are equally important for women in fisheries, this was not a truly huge problem.

After the first day, the rest of the fisheries workshops were convened as planned. This allowed us to participate in them fully. The most active group in the fisheries field was the Women's Economic Network of Newfoundland, which held two workshops and staged a cultural event of songs and poetry.

Personal experiences

The workshops were called 'Women's Role in Fisheries in Newfoundland' and 'Women Healing Oceans'. In the first of these, the women narrated personal experiences of how the fisheries crisis had affected their lives. In the second, they highlighted how a new respect for the life of the sea had to take over and needed to

be developed, if there were to be a future for their communities.

Finally, the Women and Fisheries Network from Fiji held a workshop on 'Women in Fisheries Development with Special Reference to South Pacific Islands'. One of their objectives was to develop small-scale aquaculture and subsistence harvesting of marine resources for local needs, as opposed to the development efforts based on foreign capital and great industrialization projects.

In essence, what really happened at the Forum was that several networks of women in fisheries were formed without any prior contacts whatsoever. It was promising to get to know about these local and regional activities. All were characterized by the breaking of traditional borders.

No network or group divided women interested in fisheries into subgroups. It was not the trade union interests of women in fish processing, or the market prospects for fish-selling women, or the intellectual games of academics, that made up the groups of women.

Rather, women concerned about sustainable fisheries and their livelihoods found themselves in the same network, whether they were primary producers, wives of fishermen or academics from women's or fisheries research groups. Perhaps this is the women's way of organizing.

The environmental contexts, and the importance of fish production for local consumption and needs, were common concerns. The attention of the women seemed to be concentrated here. This may well be one conclusion that could be drawn from this international gathering. I believe it was the huge size of the Forum and the overwhelming amount of activities that effectively frustrated any one group from taking the initiative to establish a get-together, on the spot, of all women-in-fisheries organizations.

We also missed the organizational experience of Aleyamma Vijayan from the ICSF Women in Fisheries Programme, who, at the last minute, was unfortunately hindered from participating. At any rate, the door has been thrown open for future contacts. Those that were already established at the Forum show a possibility for common preparations for the future. To establish shared goals or strategies was not the agenda of the networks at the Forum. Rather, it was to exchange and participate in one another's experiences. In any case, local activities seem to be at the core of efforts to change fisheries as well as women's positions in fisheries.

Until this Fourth World Conference on Women, women's role in fisheries remained invisible in international documents on women's politics. As at other UN conferences, preparatory committees had been already negotiating the final document to be adopted at the conference.

The issue of women in fisheries was highlighted at the preparatory committee in New York in March 1995. The past invisibility of the importance of fisheries as a women's issue has not been doe to ill will, but rather due to the lack of promoters for the issue. When Norway raised it as an issue to be included along with agriculture, it was adopted without any resistance.

New recognition

In the official UN Conference's Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, women's role and needs in the fisheries sector now find mention as part of the strategic objectives. The chapters on poverty, environment and colonies recommend that the needs and efforts of women be addressed. The entry of fisherwomen into the arena of international women's politics is now a fact. It is up to us to contribute to, and make use of, this arena in the future.

This report is by Eva Munk-Madsen of the Norwegian College of Fishery Science, University of Tromso, Norway

Persistent organic pollutants

Cleaning up the world's oceans

At the UNEP's conference in Washington, nations agreed to draft a global treaty to ban ocean pollutants

Buttressed by alarming evidence of rising levels of pollution in the world's seas, and increasing threats to human health, governments which attended the global conference of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Washington, D.C., from 23 October to 3 November 1995, committed to negotiating a new global agreement to ban persistent organic pollutants (POPs).

The 110 countries which participated at the conference are now committed to working towards a legally binding agreement that will eliminate a prioritised list of POPs, including DDT, PCBs, dioxins and a number of pesticides.

Both the 'Washington Declaration' and the detailed Programme of Action agreed at the conference commit the international community to "develop[ing] a global, legally binding instrument...for the reduction and/or elimination of emissions and discharges, whether intentional or not, and, where appropriate, the elimination of the manufacture and the use of, and illegal traffic in" the prioritized POPs. After controls are in place, additional POPs could be added to the list, if scientists agree that they are harmful.

At the same time, the agreement recognizes the special needs of developing countries, calling for "economically feasible and environmentally sound" alternatives, as well as a "step-by-step" approach, if necessary, in moving away from POPs.

DDT, for example, is used heavily in developing countries to protect crops and control mosquitoes and the strains of malaria they spread. With regard to DDT, Salif Diop, special advisor to the Minister of Environment in Senegal, said "It's good to ban these products, but we have to find the right substitutes."

POPs are volatile and travel long distances via air or water. They accumulate in the fatty tissues of animals, including humans, and there is growing evidence that they lead to cancer, damage the reproductive and immune systems and cause developmental problems.

The overwhelming majority of POPs are unnatural, artificial chemicals. They are extremely persistent, with some taking many decades to completely disappear. They concentrate through the food chain, a phenomenon known as bioaccumulation, with life at the top of the food chain, such as humans and marine mammals, accumulating damaging levels of these chemicals.

In March 1996, a UNEP-linked Inter-governmental Forum on Chemical Assessment will meet to further examine the scientific and technical aspects of eliminating POPs. Participants will work out a process to agree on proposals for action that will be considered at UNEP's next Governing Council meeting in January 1997.

Several of the governments involved in the Washington Conference have suggested that the Montreal Protocol on ozone depletion serves as a good 'model' for addressing POPs, and that the treaty negotiations could be concluded by the end of 1997, if governments show good faith and commitment to moving forward in addressing this critical issue.

Actions decided

In addition to POPs, the Washington Conference agreed on actions for other land-based pollutant categories, that is,

sewage, radioactive substances, heavy metals, oils (hydrocarbons), nutrients, sediment mobilization, litter and physical alteration and destruction of habitat.

It also addressed related cross-sectoral issues, especially in relation to mobilization of resources (financing to assist developing countries), capacity building, the establishment of a clearing house, and institutional follow-up at the international level, coordinated by UNEP.

With regard to sewage, the plan instructs UNEP to draft a proposal to address inadequate treatment and management of waste water including raw sewage that is discharged into oceans and seas. A statement from UNEP pointed out that large amounts of untreated municipal waste water are released directly into sea water in industrialized as well as developing countries.

As part of the UN's monitoring and follow-up to the 1992 Earth Summit, this year's Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) will focus on ocean issues at its annual meeting, set for 18 April to 3 May 1996. It is expected that key issues addressed at the Washington Conference, including POPs, sewage and institutional follow-up by UNEP and other international agencies, will be a special area of concern.

This piece is by Cliffon Curtis, Oceans/Biological Diversity Political Advisor, Greenpeace International

Safety at sea

Choppy seas, unsafe work

Even as technology makes rapid strides, the problem of safety at sea remains far from resolved

The fishing industry capture sector has probably the worst industrial safety record of any major industry.
—David Thomson

An analysis of serious casualty statistics published by the International Maritime Organization based on data from Lloyds Maritime Information Services seems to support this view. Between 1982 and 1991, as many as 1,186 persons and 756 fishing vessels (of 100 grt and above) were reported lost or missing.

It is also significant that the number of persons lost or missing at sea was much higher in the case of fishing vessels than in the case of oil tankers. An analysis of the geographical distribution of fishing vessel casualties in the same 10-year period reveals that the most accident- prone areas were off the coasts of Britain, Japan, Korea and East Africa.

However, in the case of the small-scale or artisanal fishery fleet, reliable casualty data is not available, despite the predominance of accidents. "This is ironic, since the importance of this sector is evident from FAO estimates of the number of vessels and persons employed in the large-scale, medium-scale and artisanal fisheries.

In the artisanal sector, the incidence of loss of life and accidents on vessels may equal, or even exceed, that on commercial fleets, as these boats are often poorly equipped. According to one estimate, in the artisanal fisheries sector alone, each year around 12,000 men and 45,000 boats may well be lost in accidents at sea.

Such accidents rarely get reported, except when associated with major newsworthy events such as typhoons in the Philippines or tidal waves in Bangladesh. According to a retrospective national sea safety survey done in Guinea (Conakry for the three-year period 1988-91, the death toll touched 110, while 68 persons reported injuries, and equipment losses came close to $285,000.

The death rate due to accidents on fishing boats and transport canoes amounted to half a per cent of the 6,894 registered fishermen dying each year in accidents at sea.

Safety training for fishermen has, however, largely been targeted at persons serving on the larger fishing vessels, usually over 24 m. International conventions and subsequent legislation have been instrumental in setting minimum standards for the construction and equipment of vessels, and for the certification of the crew of these vessels.

It was only after 1988, when member governments of FAO, ILO and IMO approved a 'Document for Guidance on Fishermen's Training and Certification', that internationally acceptable guidelines were available for even smaller vessels.

This document addresses all vessels, irrespective of size. It sets considerable responsibilities on the relevant government departments of member countries.

Accident reporting

However, while economically developed countries with large or medium-size fishing fleets are well able to look after the training needs of fishing vessel crews, this is not true for developing nations where artisanal fisheries predominate. Often, there is neither a comprehensive method of reporting accidents nor legislation to cover the certification of crew members,

standards of construction and equipment to be carried. Further, there are no regular surveys to ensure the seaworthiness of vessels.

The first issue that needs to be tackled to reduce casualties in the artisanal sector is the lack of reliable data. FAO recommends that a survey of fishing craft and their range of operation is necessary to estimate the needs, goals and design parameters of a safety programme appropriate for the artisanal sector. This should be followed by a comprehensive survey of past accidents.

FAO, which works directly with small-scale fishermen in many parts of the world, has developed some practical training programmes on safety at sea. Useful safety tips and innovations for small boat fishermen are summarized in the FAO/South Pacific Commission Manual No. 28 of 1987.

But problems of safety at sea are unlikely to disappear overnight. "There have been great improvements in safety but the casualty rate is still 'the same: When technology improves, fishermen take greater risks. You keep pushing technology to the limit," says Andy R. Smith of FAO's Fisheries Department.

This piece is compiled from various sources by Chandrika Sharma of ICSF's Madras Office

A workshop in search of an agenda

The recent London Workshop aimed at grand global decisions, but its agenda was sadly North-biased

It was billed the 'London Workshop on Environmental Science, Comprehensiveness and Consistency in Global Decisions on Ocean Issues'. Quite a mouthful. But what's in a title?

Plenty. In the case of this workshop, hosted by the British government and co-sponsored by the Brazilian government (which had been solicited by the British government as representative of the developing countries) and held between 30 November and 2 December 1995, a more concise title might have helped focus the debate a bit sharper.

As it was, there was hardly an issue left unraised during this three-day meet. The International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF) was but one of the 30 or so international NGOs who participated at this meeting, where the agenda was not always clear, but where the floor was always open.

At first glance, the workshop title would seem to suggest a focus on the use of environmental science in global decision-making, and that issues of consistency and comprehensiveness would be major themes. Such naive assumptions were quickly dispelled.

Rather, the *raison d'etre* of the workshop seemed to be to provide an opportunity to discuss the entire spectrum of policy issues relating to the use and abuse of the oceans. The only limiting factors were the time allocated, the delegates present and their own agendas.

It did not seem to bother the joint Chairs from UK and Brazil that the breadth of the agenda had expanded from the global to the universal. Questions like 'Should decisions on oceans issues include coastal zone management and issues on climate change?' seemed as relevant as discussions on the difference between global issues and ubiquitous issues.

Thus it was that the term 'oceans' gradually became synonymous with the marine environment in general, and 'environmental science' came to include a wide variety of considerations.

The workshop was part of the British government's contribution to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development which will meet in March 1996 to review Chapter 17 (the so-called Ocean's Chapter) of Agenda 21 of UNCED. But how the issues raised will be taken forward through the UN process remains to be seen.

That it was possible to produce such a concise five-page, 24-point draft report outlining the conclusions of the co-chairmen following such a broad-based debate, is as much a tribute to their skills in chairing, as it is to the skills of the sessions' rapporteurs.

Earlier, the British Government Panel on Sustainable Development had recommended that "the (British) Government takes steps to promote the establishment of an inter-governmental Panel on the Oceans. Such a body, sponsored by the UN agencies concerned and similar in scope to the inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change, could be set the task of examining the science, assessing the human impact, and putting in place a framework for the responsible management of the oceans, including fish stocks, marine resources and measures to cope with pollution."

Ambitious aims

The London workshop was a response to this recommendation. The workshop set itself rather ambitious objectives.

It set out to discuss:

- the range and merit of the inter-governmental organizations addressing marine issues like fisheries, pollution etc;
- the extent to which there is suitable access to good science;
- the effectiveness of current arrangements where global actions are required; and
- the possible need for a global oceans panel.

Fifty States and about 25 intergovernmental and NGOs were invited to nominate delegates. Interestingly, of the 92 country delegates listed, over 70 per cent were from the North (Europe, the US, Canada and Australia), about 9 per cent were from Latin America and around 5 per cent were from African and Caribbean countries.

In addition, II international agencies were represented, and 31 NGOs. The latter two groups almost entirely comprised organizations and individuals from the North, while the NGOs included commercial interest groups (representing oil extraction and fisheries), consultants and environmental interest groups. Representation from the South was, therefore, very weak. Despite this very skewed participant profile, the workshop structure over the three days offered the maximum opportunity for all delegates to participate.

"The first day provided an opportunity for delegates to listen and respond to the workshop agenda and the keynote paper, titled 'What are the Key Pressure Point Issues Affecting the Sustainability of the Oceans?', presented by Alastair Macintyre of the Marine Forum for Environmental Issues.

The second day began with an address from the UK Secretary of State for the Environment, John Gummer. The proceedings were then divided into three parallel panels, discussing different issues: Scientific and Policy Analysis; Successful Policy Formulation; and Successful Policy Implementation.

On the third day, the outputs of the three panels and the draft workshop report were discussed. The proposal for an intergovernmental Panel on the Oceans was rejected almost unanimously. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) described the multitude of international agencies already existing as an 'alphabet soup' of acronyms, which needed no more. However, most delegates seemed to agree that decision-making could be improved by better international coordination.

The paper by WWF, titled 'A Global Framework for the Responsible Management of the Oceans', proposed that improvements could be made to the existing body of global and regional arrangements by designing a Global Framework. This could:

- identify and prioritize problems and solutions;
- mobilize financial and political support; and
- keep under review the implementation of principles and standards established at the global level.

The paper went on to discuss how such a framework could be established, how it would function, and how it would assist the role of the UN General Assembly in reviewing and evaluating the implementation of UNCLOS.

ICSF questioned how any new inter-governmental panel would fit into the current international hierarchy of inter-governmental bodies, and where it would receive its mandate from. It also noted that the collective experience of the many such already existing bodies seemed to show that most nations choose to ignore or modify the scientific advice given, according greater priority to satisfying political and commercial interests.

As would be expected from such a North-biased meeting, where so many scientists had gathered, there were many strong proposals for improving the quality of scientific data feeding into the global decision-making process, and for training scientists from the South. It was pointed out that scientific knowledge is but one system of knowledge and there were others.

In particular, for coastal communities in many parts of the world, decision-making was based on traditional knowledge-and had been so for thousands of years. In the modern context, scientific knowledge and management systems tended, in many cases, to undermine traditional systems without being able to fully replace them. It was also noted that scientific knowledge is value-laden and groups of scientists representing different interests (both national and commercial) were divided on which scientific data was correct.

Attention was also drawn to the importance of the social sciences and it was urged that they should be accorded the same importance as the physical sciences in global decision-making. One of the EU delegates pointed out that their own resource constraints imposed limitations on how the social sciences could be used in decision- making.

In the case of the EU, the Council of Fisheries Ministers only receives information on fish stocks and recommendations for TAC levels from DG XIV of the European Commission. The Commission does not provide the Council of Fisheries Ministers with social or economic data, as they have no budgetary provision to carry out socio-economic studies. To a great extent, therefore, decision-making tends to be more a product of political expediency than scientific recommendations, which is probably one of the reasons why the Common Fisheries Policy is in such a muddle.

It would seem that there is a great deal that the EU (and others) can learn from the Australian experience about the importance of integrating environmental, economic, social and scientific considerations into policy formulation.

In her presentation to the workshop, Annie Ilett, the Australian government delegate, pointed out that "ultimately decisions about the way in which the oceans are managed are political ones made by governments, but if they are not accepted by those most directly affected, they are likely to have little effect... Co-operative and integrated approaches, which take account of environmental, economic and social considerations, are crucial."

Various links

Concerns were also raised about the links between the causes of poverty, its alleviation and issues relating to the environment. In particular, it was noted that environmental degradation affects the poorest people first and foremost and

that the least developed countries are least able to take effective actions to address environmental problems.

The links and contradictions between trade and sustainable development were noted, and especially the potential impact of free trade on the environment. The ICSF delegate stressed that the implementation of Agenda 21 could easily be undermined by the establishment of the World Trade Organization and the implementation of GATT. Where the emerging economies of developing nations were being opened up to the full forces of the free market, poor coastal communities and fragile coastal resources had become extremely vulnerable. It was pointed out that a special Commission on Trade and the Environment has been set up and will deal with such issues.

There is clearly no shortage of information, issues and views to be fed into the CSD review of Chapter 17. Lessons of particular interest that derived from the workshop include:

'Ocean issues' know few boundaries, encompass the marine environment in general and include coastal zone management, ocean catchment areas, climatic concerns, natural resources exploitation, States' rights and responsibilities and technology transfer.

Environmental science is but one of several information sources that needs to feed into the policymaking process. Other scientific information deriving from the social sciences, political considerations, and an understanding of traditional knowledge and management systems are equally important.

There are multiple international organizations compiling, processing and publishing scientific information for decision-making on ocean issues. There are, however, often elements of competitiveness between organizations and interests that make such information value-laden and partial, and prone to misuse. There is also often a lack of co-operation and co-ordination between such organizations, which can exacerbate the misuse of information.

Workshop papers

What are the key pressure point issues affecting the sustainability of the oceans? By Alastair Macintyre

Ocean science and the sustainable use of the oceans: Definitions and current understanding by Alan Longhurst

Ocean science and policy issues by John Steele

Bringing environmental, economic, social and scientific considerations together in policy formulation: The way ahead by Annie Ilett

Global arrangements for ensuring management of the oceans, by the World Wide Fund for Nature, presented by Indrani Lutchman

Linking science an d management: implementation based on the ICES Inter-governmental model by Christopher Hopkins

The specific outputs from this workshop include two studies commissioned by the UK Government. One is on the extent to which there may be gaps in the existing international arrangements to manage the world's fish stocks. "The other is on the effectiveness of integrated action over marine resources and marine pollution.

In addition to the report of the co-chairmen, seven papers arose from the workshop (see box). These will feed into the UK Government's input to the CSD review of Chapter 17 of Agenda 21.

This report has been sent by Brian O'Riordan of the Intermediate Technology Development Group, Rugby, UK

FAO Committee on Food Security

What, food security sans fisheries?

At the 21st session of the FAO Committee on World Food Security in Rome, ICSF commented on the Draft Policy and Plan of Action

We would like to draw the attention of the Committee on World Food Security to the very important contribution that fisheries make to food security, particularly in countries of the South, and the central role of artisanal fishworkers and their communities in ensuring the sustainability of fishery resources. We feel that the Draft Policy Statement and Plan of Action do not adequately address these issues.

FAO has estimated that 120 million people are economically dependent on fisheries. In many of the poorest communities of the world, fish is a crucial source of low-cost protein, providing essential micro-nutrients as well as income. The Draft Policy Statement and Plan of Action needs to reflect this important contribution of fisheries to food security as well as the central role of fishworkers as resource managers.

In particular, we would urge the Committee to review the section 'Food from Forests and Fisheries', under Commitment 4, especially paragraphs 59 and 60. We feel that the following points need to be given more serious consideration:

At the outset, we would like to observe that fisheries, like forestry, provide more than just food products. Fisheries can make an important contribution to food security in at least three distinct areas: livelihoods; employment and income; and nutrition. Fisheries resources are of crucial social, economic and nutritional importance in many countries, particularly Small Island Developing States and in countries with land of low agricultural potential. Fisheries can also provide an important buffer to communities in drought-prone areas (for example, the sub-Sahelian region), and those areas subject to other natural or man-made disasters.

The industrial development of fishing has had a major negative impact on the contribution of fisheries to food security. "The decade of the 1990s has witnessed a levelling off of fisheries production for direct human consumption.

This is due, in no small part, to overfishing and habitat destruction caused by overinvestment in industrial fishing, and the wide use of non-selective and environmentally unsafe fishing gears and practices. Fisheries can provide a naturally renewable resource if appropriate management practices and fishing methods and techniques are applied.

The destruction of the fishery habitat by pollution (siltation, agricultural run-off, industrialization, etc.) coastal development (construction, industry, reclamation, etc.) and destructive fishing practices threaten fishery production in many areas. Responsible habitat management can make a significant contribution to stabilizing and increasing fish production. Thus it is increasingly important to integrate fisheries into coastal area management.

Central issues

Contrary to the statement in paragraph 60, aquaculture is not the only way that current per capita fish supplies can be maintained or increased. More importantly, we have to address the central issues of overfishing and habitat destruction, as well as post-harvest losses and fish trading practices. It should also be noted that intensive aquaculture has been the cause of extensive environmental degradation in coastal areas and the

destruction of vast tracts of productive and scarce agricultural land in many countries.

It has been widely recognized that one of the main causes of overfishing has been the open-access nature of fishing grounds. Appropriate property regimes need to be established and enforced, and we are concerned that the importances of neither agrarian nor aquarian reforms are highlighted in the Draft Action Plan. The allocation of user rights is a necessary step to reduce excess capacity, which has been one of the main factors responsible for overfishing.

In the case of artisanal fisheries, which are one of the most important sources of food and livelihoods in many of the lowest income and most food-deficit countries, there is a pressing need to establish and extend exclusive fishing zones to protect artisanal fishers from unequal competition. The special importance of artisanal fisheries is highlighted in the FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, and we strongly disagree that sustainability will be achieved by limiting the access of artisanal fisheries.

Over 30 per cent of the global fish catch' is reduced to fish-meal and oil for animal feeds and other products. The potential contribution of the large quantities of small pelagic fish species to global food security will only be realized if these wasteful industrial processes are curbed and the fish redirected for direct human consumption. This is an area where research efforts need to be considerably intensified.

As much of 30 per cent of the global fish catch is wasted due to post-harvest losses. Improvement in post-harvest fish handling and processing, therefore, has the potential to greatly enhance food '' supplies,

FAO have estimated that as much as 27 million tonnes (equal to some 30 per cent of the global catch) is discarded each year I in commercial fisheries. Given that much of this discarded fish is immature, such practices can have a devastating effect on fish stocks and biodiversity,

It is estimated that some 40 per cent of the global fish catch enters the international; fish trade. There is also a highly skewed distribution of consumption patterns between the North and South, which often leads to fish which is critical for local food security moving into international markets.

Critical to health

Responsible fish trading practices which do not adversely affect the nutritional rights and food security of people for whom fishery products are critical to health and well-being need to be established and enforced.

Thus, in our view, the sustainable contribution of fisheries to food security can be enhanced if the global community commits itself to the following actions:

- counter the threats of industrial fisheries and the use of non-selective and environmentally damaging fishing gears and practices;
- integrate fisheries into coastal area management;
- develop aquaculture in ways which do not undermine other productive activities in the coastal
- recognize the importance of artisanal fisheries and territorial use rights;
- reduce post-harvest losses and channel more fish into direct human consumption; and
- enforce responsible trading practices.

This intervention at the Rome meeting of the FAO Committee on Food Security on 29 January 1996 was made by Sebastian Mathew on behalf of ICSF.

Document

Sustainable development

A call for a new balance

Friends of the Earth International wants the Commission for Sustainable Development to address fundamental issues

In view of the continuing crisis in world fisheries, Friends of the Earth International (FoEI) calls upon the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) to address the issue of over-capitalization of the world fishing fleet at its forthcoming April 1996 session.

We call upon the CSD to acknowledge that world fisheries are going through a crisis, characterized by resource depletion, destruction of coastal communities, serious conflicts over resources and the use of fishing techniques which destroy the marine environment.

Furthermore, there is a need to recognize that at the root of these problems lies a tremendously over-capitalized global fishing fleet. The gap between the investments in the global fishing fleet and the available resources leads to an annual deficit of around US$ 54 billion.

Fish was once the poor man's protein. Now more and more fish are being exported from the South to the North. They often end up as luxury food or feed for livestock, pets and farmed fish.

This development is threatening the contribution of fish to food security in the Third World. This trend is closely linked to the structure of the global fishing fleet and to the structure of international trade.

Therefore, we call upon the CSD and national governments submitting reports to the CSD to work to secure the availability of fish for those who depend on it.

This will help re-establish a balance between capacity and available resources through a drastic reduction in the world's industrial fishing fleet. In the process of fleet reduction, unambiguous criteria need to be set to decide which portions should be eliminated from fishing.

We note that, to a certain extent, such considerations are to be found in UNCED's Agenda 21, the UN Convention on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks and the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

FoEI, therefore, calls upon the CSD to conclude that there must be a conscious effort by the international community to reduce and restructure the world's fishing fleet and to promote the following criteria as part of such a strategy:

- usage of as little energy as possible per unit of catch
- employment of as many people as possible per unit of catch
- contribution to food security
- minimizing of by-catch and discards
- minimizing the negative impact environment.

This report has been sent by Gunnar Album of Friends of the Earth International

Inside the homes of the victims

Through a narrow focus on fleets and markets, the EU's fishing policies drastically affect countries of the South

In 1990, the total fleet of the European Union (EU), numbering over 104, 000 fishing vessels, accounted for a fifth of global marine catches, 28 per cent of which were harvested from either the high seas or the waters of other countries. However, those six and a half million tonnes of fish were not enough for the biggest fishery products market in the world. The EU imported nearly seven million tonnes of fishery products that year, while exporting only 1.3 million tonnes. On its own, it absorbed 38 per cent of the international trade in fishery products.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the impact of EU fisheries policies extends significantly beyond its borders, especially affecting developing countries.

There are many factors underlying and strengthening this impact, but two of them stand out as the most important ones: the EU's failure to manage its own fishery resources; and its need to ensure supply for its markets and its agro-food industries, in order to remain competitive in international markets.

In the first substantive session of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, held in the UN headquarters in New York in July 1993, a representative of the EU addressed the plenary to explain how good a fishery management system the EU had applied in its waters. According to him, the TACs (Total Allowable Catches) had provided for the conservation of EU resources at healthy levels.

Mid-term review

It is not known how many delegates actually believed him. His EU partners probably did not. A year and a half earlier, in the 1991 Report to the European Council and the European Parliament on

the mid-term review of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), the Commission of the European Communities (CEC) had recognized that the management of marine fishery resources through the sole means of the setting of a TAG and some technical measures had affected the stocks to such a point that they "are at risk owing to excess fishing mortality".

Some stocks were subject to a fishing effort up to 40 per cent more than that needed to reach the Maximum Sustainable Yield (MSY). But how had this been possible? There are many answers to this question. Even if the TACs were theoretically based on scientific criteria, as a matter of fact, as still happens, not always were the scientists' recommendations adopted. The final decisions are usually made by a council of ministers, in which each minister is much more concerned about satisfying the demands of his own industry than in the long-term conservation of stocks.

Only in December 1995 did the ministers adopt serious cuts in quotas for some species, and then only due to pressure from Norway, which has fishing agreements with the EU. On the other hand, the lack of control of fishing activities in the EU-especially in the Mediterranean Sea-has been proverbial.

One of the pillars of the CFP is the 'equality of access' for every member State (except for Spain and Portugal, which, though part of the Community since 1986 have, until I January 1996, been subject to an especially stringent fishing regime in EU waters). In the absence of controls on fishing effort, the TAGS regime only lead to a 'fishing race' for fleets and catches.

In terms of fleets, the Commission itself has made an important contribution to this race. Among the most significant revelations of the 1991 Report is the lack of co-ordination between those EU civil servants responsible for the conservation of resources and those responsible for the structural policy (two of the main arms of the CFP, the markets policy being the third one).

Modernization

In the period 1983-1990, the Community; devoted 41 per cent of its structural' budget either to new vessel constructions ' (30 per cent) or to the modernization of existing ones (14 per cent). In comparison,

After the Turbot War

According to the trade press, at least 11 of the Spanish vessels that have left the turbot fishery in the high seas due to tighter regulations have obtained licenses to fish in poor countries like Angola, Mauritania, Guinea Conakry and Guinea Bissau. Thus the transfer of fishing capacity from North to South continues in the wake of the much publicized Turbot War.

it "only" spent 14 per cent of this budget in adjusting fishing capacity (not only by scrapping vessels but also by exporting them to other countries).

If one takes into account the fact that those subsidies encouraged even larger investments, and that the vessels that were 'adjusted' were, as a rule, the less efficient ones, the result of the policy is evident: a significant increase of EC fishing capacity. In essence, the CFP has worsened an already existing problem.

As fishing overcapacity became a clear problem even for the Commission, given the progressive deterioration of EU resources, the need to find a solution entered the range of political priorities. "The introduction of 'joint ventures' into the EU structural legislation in 1990 was not casual.

Spain had already used this formula: shipowners who set up a fishing company with anyone from a country rich in fishing resources received a subsidy to sell their fishing vessels to this joint venture, in such a manner that the exported vessels changed their flags and were no more the responsibility of Spain. In fact, before entering the EEC, Spain had already exported 216 vessels in this manner, mainly to the UK, Morocco, Argentina, Mauritania, Mexico and Senegal.

When, in 1990, Namibia closed its waters to foreign fleets, 150 large Spanish freezer trawlers found themselves with no alternative fishing ground. Many of them had to be tied up in the Galician harbours of Vigo and Marin. It was not too difficult to have predicted Namibia's move, given the poor state of its hake stocks.

But, surprisingly enough, most of these vessels were brand new. In 1986, a legal loophole had allowed the construction of nearly 100 new freezer trawlers. These began operations around 1989. At the very least, it can be said that the loophole proved extremely profitable for the Spanish shipyards and their bankers.

Neither the EU fishing agreements with Third World countries nor the renewal of those that Spain had negotiated on its own were enough to redeploy these vessels. Spain strongly pushed for joint ventures which had proved so useful in the past. For the EU, this opened new possibilities of redeploying the excess fishing capacity that its irresponsible policy had generated. From the very start, not only large freezer trawlers, but also much smaller vessels were allocated a specific range of subsidies.

Cameroon: Spanish shipyards' new customer

The Ship-owners' Union of Cameroon has ordered Spanish shipyards to construct 50 multipurpose shrimp trawlers, to be financed through a Spanish loan from the Funds for Aid to Development (FAD). To get this loan, Cameroon has cancelled its 5 billion pesetas (US$ 400 million) agreement with Spain. This has been the result of lobbying by the Spanish private shipyards association, ASEGA, which will build the vessels. In the fierce International competition, shipbuilders—and their workers—are thoroughly insensitive to the fortunes of millions of small-scale fishermen (around 35,000 in Cameroon) who suffer the consequences of the new vessels being built.

In 1992, a 'New CFP' was designed. For the first time, there were references to the conservation of marine ecosystems and how these would be affected by fishing activities. One of the main objectives was to attain a balance between available resources and fishing capacity. In 1993, the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Orientation (IFOP) was created. It came into force the next year.

The IFOP is in charge of both structural and market interventions. Since fisheries have entered the range of the EU Structural Funds, the amount of money available for the IFOP is far greater than before. Between 1983 and 1990, the Commission spent 1280 million ECU in its structural policy and markets organization. Between 1994 and 1999, it plans to spend 1140 million ECU in Spain alone.

Difficult bureaucracy

At first, the introduction of joint ventures was not very successful. This was because the overall administrative bureaucracy made it difficult and time-consuming to get the approval for shipowners' projects. Between 1990 and 1994, 'only' 28 joint venture projects (of these, 21 were Spanish) had been approved. The

Squaring the circle

Several European NGOs have formed the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Agreements (CFFA), which campaigns for fundamental changes in the EUs policy and practice on fisheries agreements with countries in the South. The Coalitions particular concerns are the sustainable use of fish resources for the benefit of fishing communities who depend on them for their livelihoods and food security, and the conservation of global fish stocks for future generations. CFFA publishes a regular newsletter as well as specific briefing papers on issues which relate to development policy and fishery agreement practices.

On 26 September 1995, CFFA hosted a seminar titled Squaring the Circle: Reconciling EU Development Co-operation Policy Objectives with the Policy and Practice of EU-ACP Fisheries Agreements. Around 50 participants discussed the pressing problems of the European Union (EU) fishing fleet faced with overcapacity, and the development needs of fisheries in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states, which are signatories to the Lome Convention.

In Europe, the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) is in disarray. It is estimated that the EUs fishing fleet has an overcapacity of at least 40 percent, in terms of the resources available in EU waters.

The EUs policy on overcapacity is either to pay fishermen to scrap their boats through decommissioning grants or to encourage their redeployment to other waters. In its own waters, the EUs fisheries policy has led to the devastation of fish stocks. Now it is threatening the stocks of other countries.

The EUs policy on development co-operation avowedly seeks to promote the sustainable economic and social development in the most disadvantaged countries as well as their integration into the world economy. It campaigns against poverty, advocates respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. It promotes democracy and good governance.

However, it is ironic that although artisanal fisheries are widely acknowledge to sustain some of the worlds poorest and most disadvantages people, the commercial interests of EU fishing companies are being encouraged to undermine them. Such activities directly contradict the EUs stated policy objective of promoting sustainable economic and social development for the benefit of the most underprivileged.

It was to address these issues of the mismatch between EU development co-operation and the practice of fishery agreements that CFFA organized the Brussels seminar. It coincided with the meeting of the EU-ACP Joint Assembly, where fishery issues and negotiated agreements with the EU were being scrutinized.

The seminar gave NGO and fishworker representatives from both North and South a chance to discuss with Commission officials, parliamentarians and official representatives from ACP states the potentially contradictory issues of local development priorities and external commercial interests.

More information can be had from Béatrice Gorez, Co-ordinator, CFFA, Rue Grétry 65, B-100 Brussels, Belgium. Fax:32 2 2178305

introduction of the IFOP has used the 'subsidiary principle' to delegate the decision-making processes to member States. This dramatically increased the availability of capital. Also, the process to establish companies, associations and joint ventures became highly simplified. In 1994 alone, 19 projects were approved.

All this would not be a matter of special concern if not for the fact that the EU systematically allows the fishing activities of its fleets to be conducted under secrecy, and virtually unchecked. "The EU has already consistently displayed this behaviour in the fisheries agreements it has concluded with ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries.

A detailed examination of the EU's fishing agreements with ACP countries its poorest partners give a good idea of the actual moral principles behind the EU's policy. These 'access to stocks / financial compensation' agreements are established for a two-to four-year period, and normally contain a tacit renewal clause. "The financial compensation received by the ACP country is divided into two parts: an amount directly paid by the EU, and licence fees to be charged for

individual EU vessels. However, as a rule, the latter amount accounts for only 20 per cent of the total cost of the agreements.

The EU taxpayers' money makes up most of the costs of the agreements. A part of this financial compensation is devoted to bursaries programmes and scientific and technical co-operation, even if such activities do not always lead to satisfactory results.

Although there is no doubt that these agreements affect the artisanal fishing sector, the EU does not budget any allocation to prevent and correct the impact of its fleets' activities on local communities. Neither does it call for any scientific study to ensure that the catch amounts fixed in the agreements are sustainable from the point of view of stock conservation.

On the contrary, the EU Commission's Directorate General for Fisheries (DG XIV) shields itself under the strictly commercial character of the agreements, and claims of the ACP countries' sovereignty. This is how it delivers its financial compensation to the governments, without establishing any condition or control over the utilization of these funds.

This practice is obviously welcome by desperately indebted ACP governments, eager for hard currency. For them, this is a kind of blank cheque to be used at will, not necessarily for the people's benefit. The claim by the DG XIV that the fishing agreements are 'strictly business' is remarkable, given the fact that they fall under the scope of the Lome Convention, which covers the fisheries development policy carried on by DG VIII (in charge of co-operation).

But the secrecy that DG XIV wraps over these negotiations is even more surprising. For example, in order to catch a given quota, the fishing rights for trawlers are assigned in terms of Gross Registered Tonnage. This allows the fleet to progressively increase its fishing effort by developing technical innovations for any given tonnage.

Not made public

Furthermore, to preserve EU interests, the actual catches of the EU under a given fishing agreement are not made public. This helps avoid comparisons that could lead to a demand for increased financial compensations.

The Commission's indifference towards ACP countries'—and the European Parliament's— requirements for more transparency is plain. In October 1993, the ACP-EU Joint Assembly adopted Resolution 818 / A calling the EU to build a 'Joint Fisheries Follow-up Committee'. Pressured by its shipowners, the EU has not yet appointed its representatives to this committee.

The pervasive effects of fishing agreements on local populations, and the EU's neo-colonialist attitude towards ACP countries, were already denounced in the ACP-EEC Joint Assembly Resolution of 7 October 1993, which dealt with fisheries in the context of ACP-EEC co-operation. It states that "the 16 bilateral agreements concluded between the Community and the ACP States have certainly had beneficial results from the financial point of view, but might have contributed to the impoverishment of the population, sometimes to the damage of artisanal fishermen...".

Also, from within DG VIII (co-operation) and the European Parliament come voices calling for the conversion of classic fishing agreements with ACP countries into 'third generation' agreements which have a strong element of co-operation and involves both DG XIV and DG VIII.

Although European citizens must press the Commission to end these shameful practices, which are based on EU taxpayers' money, it is also true that the solution to the problem has to unavoidably entail a change in the attitude of ACP governments, which, more often than not, fail to adequately represent their citizen's interests and concerns. In this sense, the budget allocation for the artisanal fishing sector included in the last agreement with Senegal, as a result of Senegalese fishermen's lobbying efforts, is a first step-weak as it may be in the correct direction. This process must lead to a fuller participation of artisanal fishermen and their communities in the conservation and management of their resources.

To the governments and peoples of Southern countries, at first sight, joint ventures either with the EU or companies from other countries look brilliant.

This is because they promise a transfer of technology from Northern countries, an injection of foreign capital, employment creation and vital direct access to international markets.

Unfortunately, a closer look gives reason for some pessimism. On the one hand, taking into account the increasing mobility of capital, foreign investments may have little impact on the local economy.

On the other, since joint ventures belong to the private sector, governments have little control over technology transfer or expansion plans.

Sophistication

Further, the technological sophistication of the joint ventures' vessels may place their activities beyond the control of governments. Even if joint ventures provide employment, their vessels

Future fishing or fishing future?

Fishing communities all over the world face bleak prospects. The resource base on which their livelihoods have depended. One of the principal reasons is overfishing. The development of super-efficient fishing technology-and its introduction to fisheries all over the world-has produced a pattern of fishing that is inherently non-sustainable.

In Europe, this pattern of fishing has created a situation where the capacity to fish far outstrips the resources available. The environmental impact of the technology used also outreaches the capacity of the environment to recover. The EU is taking radical action to address this problem: It is spending hundreds of thousands of ECU from the Common Fisheries Budget to redeploy the EU fishing fleet to other waters through fisheries agreements.

The DG XIV claims that these fisheries agreements are purely commercial in nature and have nothing to do with development. Yet, for millions of people worldwide, fisheries provide the main source of food and livelihood. In many countries, fisheries have to be considered as key natural resources, with significant development potential.

Fisheries agreements have the capacity to contribute to, or to undermine, this development potential. It is not acceptable for the EU to dump its problems on the governments of a cash-hungry South, under the guise of commercial interests.

Following the EU-ACP Joint Assembly in Dakar, Senegal in February 1995, the Coalition for Fair Fisheries Agreements (CFFA), in partnership with CREDETIP (Centre de Recherche pour le Developpement Technologie Intermediarie de Peche), a Senegalese NGO, have jointly published a brochure titled Fishing for a Future. It analyzes fisheries agreement in Senegal, highlighting their impact on local fishing communities. It makes a strong case for fishing communities to be involved in the decision making processes that affect their lives. This must involve an open process of dialogue with the governments concerned, which the EU should, in fact, be encouraging.

The brochure provides insights and analysis on the inherent potential of artisanal fisheries, which are often undervalued. *Fishing for a Future* is an important contribution to the growing lobbying efforts for a greater involvement of civil society in government and for greater transparency and accountability in decision making processes.

Fishing for a Future is available in English and French from CFFA, 65 Rue Gretry, B-1000 Brussels, Belgium. Tel: 00 32 2 2181538. Fax: 0032 2 21 2178305

compete with thousands of artisanal fishermen.

Moreover, joint ventures often jeopardize the working conditions of the workers from the country of origin of the vessel, as is already the case with the Spanish crews working on joint ventures with Argentina.

They may even promote precarious and unsafe working conditions for new workers, as crews from Argentina and Chile have learnt to their dismay. Even the EU-ACP Joint Assembly has recognized that joint ventures and other forms of exporting vessels have not meant "an actual transfer of technology, nor an adaptation to technological change leading to an endogenous development". Rather, it has claimed that "there is need for a new approach to joint ventures." On the other hand, the FAO recently stated that "Fisheries, therefore, seem to be operating as a wealth 'sink'.

If the excess capacity is imported, as it is in many developing countries, the wealth of these countries is transferred and 'sinks' abroad, as reflected in a negative foreign exchange balance, without much secondary benefits for the developing countries' people (for example, the acquired excess fleets generate employment in the developed countries' shipyards)."

Not on the agenda

However, these concerns do not seem to be high up on the EU's agenda. In fact, the EU legislation does not demand a scientific study of the state of the resources prior to the transfer of one or more vessels to a joint venture.

It does not even mention the need for the recipient countries to have fisheries research organizations, nor any previous co-operation in the area of fisheries. Nowhere is mentioned the need to transfer the technology necessary to monitor the impact of the fishing vessels exported, their effect on the ecosystems (through by-catch, for instance), and, even less, their influence on local fishing communities.

In order to avoid responsibilities, the EU argues that these agreements concern the private sector. However, such a reasoning is inconsistent with the fact that many of these joint ventures would no be viable were it not for EU subsidies.

The impact of the activities of joint ventures depends upon two main factors. The first is the recipient country's ability to effectively control the activities of the ventures.

The second has to do with the development model chosen, the importance given to resource conservation and small-scale fisheries, and the need to promote the domestic and export fish markets.

From the EU's point of view, the South is a convenient dumping site for its excess fishing capacity.

Namibia, which does not depend on traditional small-scale fisheries, is perhaps a paradigmatic example of a country rich in marine resources but which displays a strong will to develop these resources for the benefit of its people.

It hopes to achieve this goal through joint ventures with foreign companies. To do so, it has had to stand up to EU pressure to establish a fishing agreement. Both the increasing cost of fisheries agreements and the ever-growing competition for scarce resources 'with other fishing powers, such as Korea, Japan and Taiwan, make the EU increasingly rely on joint ventures for its access to Southern countries' resources. This is through the 'second generation agreements'. These activities are progressively left in the hands of the private sector, and soon fall under the scope of the legal and financial dispositions of the particular society, in terms of the protection granted to investments. This is one area where any talk about ecosystem conservation or competition with artisanal fisheries or food security is plainly out of place.

Such a delegation of responsibilities by the EU is far from innocent. The absence of any kind of criteria to establish joint ventures other than the need to ensure supply to the EU market, which is the cornerstone of the CFP-is an instrument in the EU's move to ensure access to other countries' resources, while avoiding any restriction on the activities of its own operators.

In 1995, the EU witnessed two major conflicts that flung fisheries on to the world's headlines.

First, Canada illegally prosecuted the Estai, a Spanish freezer trawler fishing for Greenland halibut in international waters off Canada.

Later on, Morocco unilaterally denounced its fishing agreement with the EU, and 778 fishing vessels including 650 from Spain and 50 from Portugal had to return to their home ports.

The EU had to pay subsidies both to fishermen and shipowners as compensation until another agreement was reached, which allowed these vessels to go back to Moroccan waters from the beginning of 1996.

Overcapacity

Following these conflicts, Emma Bonino, the Commission's Fisheries Commissar, the EUs topmost political fisheries authority, declared that there was a basic problem of "fishing overcapacity". According to Bonino, decreasing this overcapacity, via scrapping of joint ventures, is at the heart of the new CFP.

Impressive as this determination may seem, apparently the reality lies in the opposite direction. A look into the allocations of the IFOP in the case of Spain shows just that. Although 36 per cent of the total budget is assigned for 'fleet readjustments; another 30 per cent is concurrently assigned for 'fleet renewal', that is, new constructions and modernization of existing vessels.

The foreseeable result is a new increase in the fishing capacity and a further industrialization of European fishing activities. This will easily result in more vessels and crews becoming redundant and future subjects for 'fleet readjustment'. Are European citizens subsidizing the building of vessels that in a near future will have to be exported into new and also subsidized joint ventures?

Notwithstanding the effects of EU's fishing fleets whether under the flag of an EU member state or not perhaps the most important impact of the EU on the South, especially on those less developed countries, has been more subtle: the export of an ideology and a model for the exploitation of marine resources.

This is an ideology that assumes and promotes the superiority of industrial fisheries over small-scale fisheries, the convenience to prioritize supply to international markets over domestic markets and the 'rationality' and 'scientific dimension' of a management model that has had such a damaging impact.

This is borne out by the experiences of countries like Newfoundland, whose fishing grounds have collapsed due to overfishing.

These are operations guided more by maximizing short-term benefits than by guaranteeing the preservation of the ecosystems. The EU fisheries co-operation which has included port construction as well as modernization schemes for artisanal fisheries has contributed to the extension of this paradigm.

This has resulted in the progressive marginalization of the weaker sectors and to the impoverishment, concentration and privatization of resources. It has also led to a loss of community control, placing it instead in the hands of a few. Furthermore, the promotion of export markets may easily decrease local access to fish the traditional source of protein for the poor.

In applying the same scientific and economic principles and fishing strategies that have endangered ecosystems in its own waters, the EU will undoubtedly contribute to the destruction of the marine environment in all of the zones where its fishing activities are conducted, or where its development model is copied.

"The EU will thus continue to promote an unsustainable exploitation of fishery resources both at home and abroad unless it comes to recognize three fundamental truths in present fisheries management:

- the exploitation of renewable but finite resources can not keep up forever with increasing demand;
- the limited regenerative capacity of resources can not match the tendency of capital to search for unlimited profits; and
- maximum economic efficiency and maximum equity in the distribution of profits are not compatible.

Guarantee conservation

A management system that really comprehends these contradictions would focus not on maximizing catches in the medium and long terms but on something even more difficult: it would seek to guarantee the conservation of resources in the face of all the current powerful forces that tend to make them unsustainable.

This article is written by Anna-Rosa Martinez, who works for GRAIN (Genetic Resources Action International), and Sergi Tudela, who is a doctorate student at the Institut de Ciencies del Mar, Barcelona

Fisheries management

Gang up to reap benefits

Only greater interaction among the protagonists involved in the fisheries sector will produce results

Tell them: they forget
Show them: they remember
Explain to them: they understand
—Chinese proverb

To dwell on a personal note, during my time of active service at sea, I operated as aggressively and effectively as the rest of the competition. However, I realized, at a very early age, that the exploitation of marine resources had limitations, and if this fact did not receive due consideration and regard, problems would inevitably develop. This observation led to prudent fish capturing methods and techniques. As they say, "There is none so pure as the converted".

In an industry like fisheries, which is burdened with many fundamental and contentious issues, several trouble spots flare up periodically around the world.

Think of these: fisheries management and effort control; environmental and ecological problems; technical conservation strategies; changing circumstances and conditions resulting from technological development. These are but a few of the burning issues facing the modern fishing industry.

Let us take a look at the fisheries management aspect of the industry, before delving into the practicalities of fishing. For some years now, I have firmly believed that the key to success in fisheries administration lies in the co-operation and collaboration of the main players concerned, that is, the scientist, the politician and the- fishery personnel. Working together, accepting and understanding the needs of one another, would bring about more solutions than all the unilateral and bilateral decisions and legislation produced so far.

Several countries around the world are now enjoying successful fishery programmes as a result of adopting and introducing viable policies and strategies. Despite these examples of successful progress, however, many more areas continue to languish in outdated practices and management methods. Quite apart from failing to exploit renewable marine resources to their full potential, these outdated methods are actually counter-productive to the long-term welfare and stability of the industry, at all levels.

The causes and reasoning behind these success stories and the less successful operations in commercial sea fishing are many and varied, and equally well documented by commentators from all over the world. There are, nevertheless, a few common denominators of success: effort, resources and *modus operandi*. Some do it methodically and properly, while others carry out their business with rather less of planning and programming, and more of gusto, in order to target results and rewards. These only lead to dwindling resources and crumbling commercial infrastructures.

Human factor

One common element is, of course, the human factor. There is no shortage of effort from practitioners in fishing. It is just unfortunate that energies are not concentrated to reach the most desirable goal: the sustainable development of the resources available.

Where two factors are involved, as is the case in fishing, it makes fairly obvious sense to implement any desirable change by targeting the factor which is capable of being influenced. In the case of fishing, where we have no control or influence over the marine resources, it is evident

that some pressure should be brought to bear on the human factor.

At first sight, this suggestion appears to say nothing new. It is exactly what fisheries legislators have been trying to do for years that is, attempting, rather desperately in some cases, to get the fishermen to change their traditional methods and practices. The main obstacle to this approach is that it is usually only the fishermen who since they are noted for their flexibility and resilience are asked to make changes, often involving substantial sacrifices.

A clear look at the problems of fisheries management makes it apparent that the implementation of change would be more successful if there were greater interaction among the protagonists involved. Gone are the days when fishermen were the sole influence in fishing. Modern methods and technology have made it necessary to introduce a controlled and programmed fishery infrastructure.

Fishermen have been joined in the field by the scientist and the politician. Both these entities must receive their rightful recognition, in order to bring about integrated fishing activity in an arena involving multinational interests. There can be benefits for the fishermen who have attentive ears and are willing to respond meaningfully to changing circumstances and conditions.

There are signs from various parts of the world that this element of closer interaction has already been recognized and appreciated. Canada and Norway are two prime examples. There are others.

In Canada, Brian Tobin, former Fisheries Minister, has already been active to bring about closer relationships between the main players in the field. Norway, apparently, is also increasing and strengthening links among fishermen, scientists and legislators. This makes sense. To have regular all-party talks would bring about a greater mutual understanding of the difficulties fishing industries are periodically faced with.

The recent outcome from the Law of the Sea Convention and the recommended FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries are steps in the right direction. However, it must be recognized that these are only recommendations, and remain some way short of giving power and true teeth to the suggested proposals.

There is enough evidence to indicate how difficult it is, at national levels, to enforce legislation in a fragmented industry deployed across the oceans of the world. In addition, there is the human factor to contend with. The old element, which has been so impossible to control and influence in the past, remains on the sidelines and ready to erupt into unrest, when resources become scarce, as has been experienced in the past.

Even the introduction of the all-party approach to negotiations will only be successful if such talks and proposals are indeed bona fide. Meetings between the main people involved can only produce the right results if each sector receives its rightful role in the negotiations.

It would serve no useful purpose if the principal players got together and after discussing and debating the key issues, everyone went home and 'did their own thing', carrying on operations as if no agreement had been reached.

Monitoring needed

Any agreements reached by these 'councils of principals' would necessarily require to be monitored and properly implemented, if any progress is to be achieved towards the ultimate goal of sustainable development of renewable marine resources.

This piece is by John C. Gowie of Aberdeen, Scotland, who has spent a working life involved in various fishing activities, including a stint as a fisheries journalist

News Round-up

Free crossing

Skippers in **Scotland** can breathe a bit easier, now that their government has scrapped the bureaucratic division between the country's two main fishing grounds.

For generations, these fishermen had to inform the authorities every time their vessels crossed the 4 degree West line separating the North Sea from the West Coast fishing grounds.

Scottish fishermen wanted these discriminatory rules thrown out, after a European Union decision to allow Spanish crews access to West Coast waters from 1 January 1996.

The deal, agreed in Luxembourg in October 1995, gave Spanish crews the limited right to fish in British waters without reporting their catches.

Waterworld

Reporting in a couple of years time will be the Independent World Commission on the Oceans, headed by Portuguese President Mario Soares. It has begun work on a three-year project on how to utilize and protect the world's maritime resources.

The commission will draft a report on issues related to oceans to be submitted to the United Nations General Assembly in 1998.

Members of the commission, numbering 40, include former Netherlands Prime Minister Ruud Lubbers, Yoshio Suzuki, the chief counselor of Japan's Nomura Research Institute, and Nobel laureate and former Costa Rican President, Oscar Arias.

The commission will consult governments, NGOs and scientists on issues like exploration and exploitation of the sea ad seabed, fisheries, pollution and the dumping of hazardous waste, and the prevention of conflicts over marine resources.

Incensed

Such conflicts, however, are unlikely to end immediately in the fisheries sector of **India**, where artisanal fishworkers have been fighting against deep-sea joint ventures in India waters. Their operations will decrease the already fast depleting stocks of fish resources.

The campaign was co-ordinated by the National Fisheries Action committee against Joint Ventures. Recently, it won a victory of sorts when a government committee recommended that no more licences should be granted for such ventures. However, Thomas Kocherry, the convenor of the Action Committee, says the issue will not be solved until all past licenses are revoked.

Trading in trouble

Some kind of deprivation is in store for the fishermen of **Taiwan.** In the wake of the free trade regime set up under APEC (Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation), both competition and pollution have increased as new industrial units come up, especially on the west coast of Taiwan. This trend is likely to put pressure on marine resources.

These problems were spotlit at the NGO Conference on APEC in Osaka in late November 1995. Ko Mei-Na, a staff member of the Fishermen's Service Centre in Taiwan, felt that trade liberalization may push down the price of fish, as happened in the case of agricultural prices.

Legal update

Pushed out of the fishery-that's what is likely to happen to the smaller, community-based fishers of **Canada** as a result of the December 1995 update of the Fisheries Act.

This is the first manor rewrite of the Act since 1968. It seeks to 'streamline' the process of regulating fisheries, devolving control from the federal government to the provinces.

The new Act will allow the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) to enter into agreements with any organization on matters relating to harvest limits, fishing licences, etc. This means that the DFO will probably negotiate with the larger players in the fishery. This will increase privatization and marginalize the smaller fishers.

To be fair, though, the DFO does recognize 'six guiding principles' for fisheries management. These include the need for conservation as well as aboriginal rights to fish resources.

Stock up fast

Conservation was evidently on the minds of officials of the European Union and Norway when they agreed on sharp cuts in mackerel, herring and plaice catches over the next two years. The aim is to protect the threatened North Sea. Total Allowable Catches (TACs) were set for 19965 with a commitment to further cuts in 1997 based on

scientific advice. The agreement affects mainly British, Dutch and Danish fisherman.

For the first time, the EU and Norway adopted a longer-term approach towards restoring stocks to a healthy state while taking account of fishermen's vital economic interests.

The negotiations were far from smooth. Norway would have preferred a quicker reduction. But an EU official said that it signalled the start of a more coherent effort to rebuild stocks.

Fish as food

Such enthusiasm also marked the outcome of the International conference on the Sustainable Contribution of Fisheries to Food Security, held in Kyoto, **Japan** from 4 to 9 December 1995.

The conference was conducted in the context of earlier efforts like the FAO World Fisheries Conference in 1984 and the provisions of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and the Rome Consensus on World Fisheries adopted at the FAO Ministerial Conference on Fisheries in March 1995.

Ninety-five countries took part in the Kyoto discussions, which focused on the significant contribution of fisheries to income, wealth and food security, especially in low-income food-deficit countries.

This can be achieved in several ways like rapid technology transfer, minimizing post-harvest losses and ensuring improved control of fishing activities in areas under national jurisdiction.

Sustained effort

Some of these issues are likely to be also discussed at the forthcoming meetings in New York, the US of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD).

The formal meetings will occur over the period 18 April to 3 May. On 24 April the meet will focus on issues related to Small Island Developing States.

Prior to this, there will be a two-week preparatory meet, which will also focus on the sectoral issues of oceans and atmosphere. This will be one among the several areas of concern at the meet.

But NGOs working on fisheries hope to place on its agenda the issue of overfishing and excess fishing capacity. On the last day, the Chair will adopt the agenda for the 1997 session and adopt the report for this year's CSD.

Save our coasts

Adopted unanimously was a declaration by the '

Save the Coast Movement' at Paradeep, Orissa, India. Farmers, fishermen and agricultural workers called on the rich nations to boycott shrimp consumption. It also appealed to NGOs like the Mangrove Action Project, the Consumer Association of Penang and the Third World Network to think of a campaign along these lines.

Further, the Paradeep convention urged State governments to make sure that existing laws are implemented. These would preserve the people's rights to land and environment.

Delegates also called for new legislation to put an end to the rising trend for intensive and extensive aquaculture projects.

Ok, Friends again?

Hopefully putting an end to disputes are the subcommittees set up under the Thai-Malaysian joint Commission.

These, the prime ministers of **Thailand** and **Malaysia** agreed,

will tackle all fishing disputes. The two prime ministers expect this process will be a long-term solution.

Malaysia has recently released some Thai fishermen imprisoned for poaching in Malaysian waters.

Thailand now wants Malaysia to release three other Thai fishermen as well as a trawler detained in Malaysia.

Perhaps as a show of goodwill, Thailand said it would continue to support the idea of the East Asia Economic Caucus(EAEC), proposed by Malaysia.

Thrown into jail

But not everyone is happy with Malaysia. Late last year, the marine division of its Fisheries Department detained 30 fishermen from Sumatra, **Indonesia** for allegedly fishing in Malaysian waters. They were aged between 15 and 72.

Their trawler, some fishing equipment and about 900 kg of fish were also seized from them west of Pangkor island.

Baiting the law

Illegal commercial fishing is rampant along the Tonle Sap and the Mekong River in **Cambodia.** A senior advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has recently warned that this is threatening the survival of several species vital to Cambodia's economy.

In some protected areas, fishermen use illegal measures like poison, electricity and even explosives to catch fish.

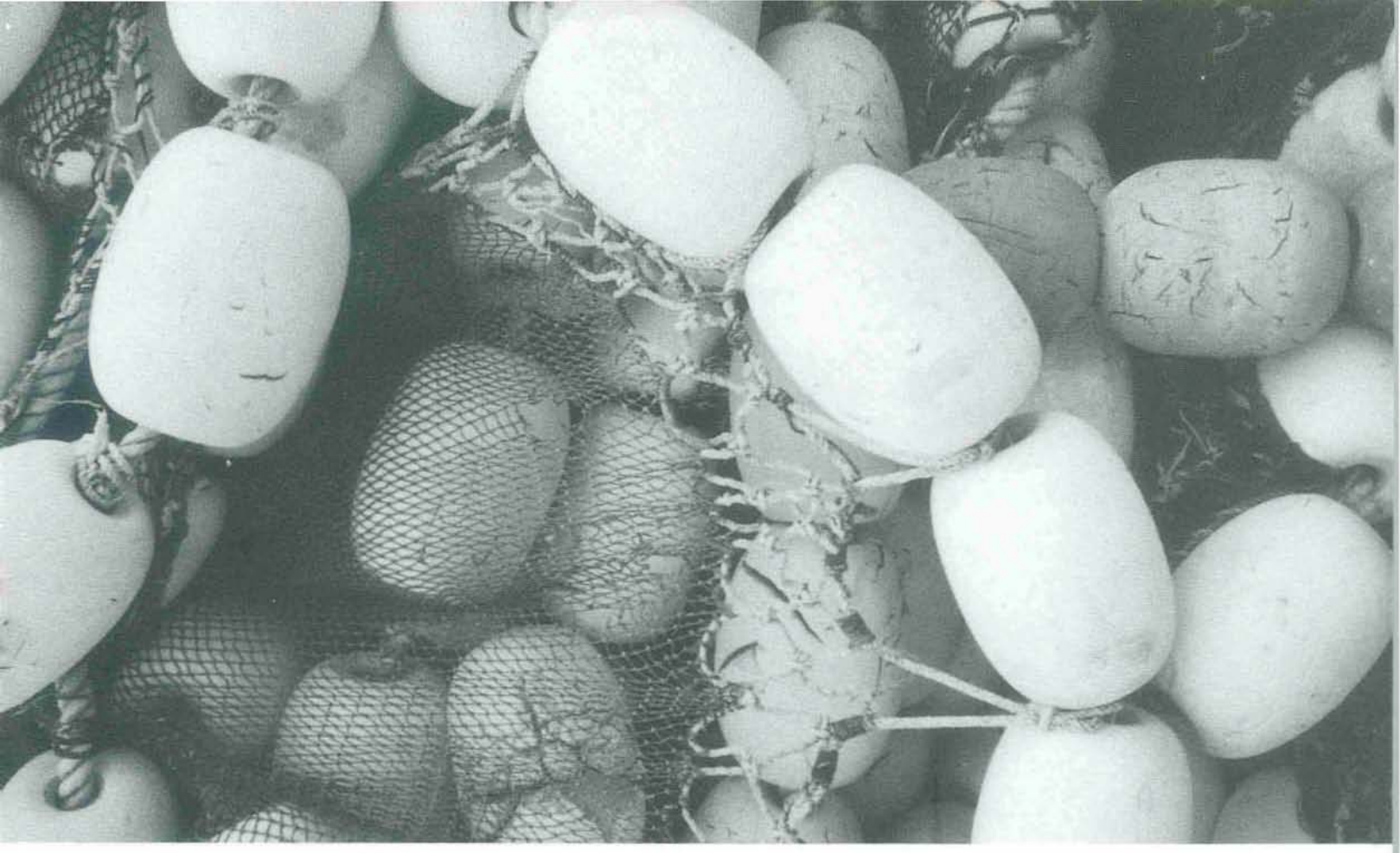
The government restricts commercial fishing in certain areas, between July and November, to ensure that the fish reproductive cycle is not disrupted.

If illegal fishing continues for five more years, several indigenous species, including the blackfish, will disappear.

But the government finds it difficult to crack down on illegal fishing because the fishermen are backed up by armed guards.

Because life originated in the sea, every living thing is descended from marine life. Indeed, we carry the ancient sea inside us, for the ionic composition of the blood of vertebrates on land bears an unmistakable resemblance to seawater. In this, as in many other things, our place in the natural world is evident. But humans are also different from other living things. Of all the many millions of species, Homo sapiens stands alone as both the one most capable of affecting other species and the one with the unquestionable ability to care about the fate of the others.

— from **Global Marine Biological Diversity**,
edited by Elliott A. Norse, Island Press, Washington, 1993



Published by
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Illustrated by
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Cover photograph:
Chilean fisherman

Photographs courtesy of
Philippe Favreliere, Brian O'Riordan, FAO
Solomon Taiyo, Cornelie Quist, Sebastian Mathew

Additional news courtesy of
Fishnews, Greenpeace International

Printed at
Nagaraj and Company, Madras

SAMUDRA REPORT No. 14 March 1996
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ICSF is an international NGO working on issues that concern fishworkers the world over. It is affiliated to the Economic and Social Council of the UN and is on ILO's Special List of Non-Governmental International Organizations. It has also been granted Liaison Status by FAO. Registered in Geneva, ICSF has offices in Madras and Brussels. As a global network of community organizers, teachers, technicians, researchers and scientists, ICSF's activities encompass monitoring and research, exchange and training, campaigns and action programmes, and also communications. SAMUDRA REPORT invites contributions and responses. All correspondence should be addressed to ICSF's Madras office.